

BASIC COMMUNITY  
IN THE  
AFRICAN CHURCHES

MARIE-FRANCE PERRIN JASSY

*translated by*

Sister Jeanne Marie Lyons

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## Introduction

The African response to colonization has been expressed on the religious plane by a multiplication of cults with a mixture of elements borrowed from Western culture and the cultures of the indigenous peoples. A whole branch of research on Africa deals with this phenomenon. Some researchers have approached it from a general point of view and have considered the causes and consequences of these movements in relation to the evolution of the societies in which they have appeared or the confessions from which they have separated. Others have presented in the form of a monograph an in-depth analysis of their appearance and characteristics.

There is no question of making a survey in a few pages of a considerable section of African literature. Just a bibliography of it would fill a volume. I propose to locate the study which follows within the current of research. This work does not really belong to either one of the two categories defined above, for it lacks the breadth of the first and the exhaustive character of the second. For practical reasons which will be adduced later, it has been necessary to limit the field of investigation to some precise points and to eliminate other aspects just as important. This research on the African

churches in North Mara is organized around the basic community as its center of interest.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of the formation and classification of religions has attracted equal attention from sociologists of religion whether considered in a Western context or through a comparison of all forms of religion. The works of Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, Richard Niebuhr, and Joachim Wach, to cite only a few, have made it possible to give a sociological content to the terms *church*, *denomination*, *cult*, and *sect*. The last is of special interest to us, for people readily speak about African sects. It is, however, difficult to make a direct connection with others' line of research for, as Bryan Wilson emphasizes, "Not all of these writers were thinking of the same thing when they wrote of sects."<sup>2</sup>

In the African context, different elements arise to complicate the problem of classifying indigenous religious movements and prevent the use of categories elaborated in other milieus. The colonial situation,<sup>3</sup> the cultural clash between Africa and the West, have led African movements to adopt an ambivalent attitude towards missionary churches. They are at one and the same time opponents and imitators, and their relations with global society reflect the same frame of mind. The term "African church"<sup>4</sup> as used here is not meant to be typological but only descriptive. It designates a religious organization of African groups which elaborates its own polity without having to refer to directives from a non-African authority. There can be degrees in this situation. For example, the pentecostal groups which appear here among the completely independent movements are attached to a Canadian mission. But it is part of the very spirit of this denomination that the church be local, and if Canada is the source of inspiration for the assemblies of Kenya and Tanzania, it is not a central authority for them. In my view, the Pentecostal Church, although missionary, does not differ in character from the other African churches.

The dimensions of this work having been defined, its content should be stated. Joachim Wach writes: "Most students place the main emphasis on such theoretical forms as

myth, doctrine, or dogma. These are important, but equally, if not more, important is the practical expression in cultus and forms of worship. Besides doctrine and rites, there is a third field of religious expression which is only now gaining the measure of attention which it merits: religious grouping, religious fellowship and association, the individual, typological, and comparative study of which is the field of the sociology of religion.”<sup>5</sup>

The limitations of our material do not permit such an ambitious enterprise, above all, as to what concerns typology. Yet it is along the lines proposed by Joachim Wach that this study is written. He writes: “A comparative study of the *forms* of the expression of religious experience, the world over, shows an amazing similarity of religious experience . . . all expression of religious experience falls under the three headings of *theoretical expression*, *practical expression*, and *sociological expression* . . . history teaches us that the dynamics of religious life is made up of the interpenetration of these three aspects.”<sup>6</sup>

Without wishing to discuss here the universal character of these traits of religious experience as defined by Wach, I have utilized these three categories for a comparative study of a concrete situation, the doctrine, social organization, and religious activities of ten African churches in the district of North Mara, Tanzania.

As observed earlier, practical imperatives dictated the choice of theme and the place of investigation. In fact, it was at the request of an American missionary society, the Maryknoll Fathers of New York, that I went to spend a year in Tanzania in the district of North Mara to gather material needed for a thesis but also to propose practical conclusions on the pastoral plane. Three problems were set me in the following form:

What are the meaning and importance of the Legio Maria,<sup>7</sup> a dissident movement founded in Kenya in 1962 from the Catholic Legion of Mary groups?

Why are the Luo leaving missionary churches, particularly the Catholic Church, for African movements?<sup>8</sup>

What are "the religious needs" of the Luo?

Field work was therefore set up within exact limits as to place and subject.

The conditions in which the inquiry was conducted had equal influence on the subject matter discussed. Since the materials had to be gathered in Tanzania, I was not able to visit the general headquarters of the African churches in Kenya or to consult their archives. That excluded any general, historical, or political approach to the life of these movements. I interested myself on the contrary in the daily life of the faithful at the level of the local community, and it seems to me that if the African churches are generally studied from top to bottom, the local organs play a role at least as important as their central organs. After the first enthusiasm aroused by a prophet or founder, it is the local community which represents the church, recruits the faithful, provides financial support for the hierarchy, acts as guardian of the faith, and gives dynamism to the movement.

The three aspects of the life of the African churches studied here are seen through a double perspective: first in the dynamic relationship between the local communities and their central organs; then within the framework of the local community itself. This second point will claim the larger share of our attention, and we shall try to look at the life of these groups from within. For example, the sources for information regarding the visions of the prophets are the testimony of the simple faithful and the local leaders living in Tanzania and not the official versions of the churches, recast since their foundation by the prophet himself and his entourage. The social organization is likewise studied from bottom to top, from the perspective of the local group, looking, as it were, through the wide end of the field glasses. In regard to religious activities, the practices of the faithful who are deprived of priests or isolated from their central organs have been our chief interest. Since these communities live and develop with almost no control or encouragement from the hierarchy, it is they who have the elements especially fitted

to attract and hold the local people without the support of any external influence.

Just as the nature of the inquiry has been dictated by the means available, and the conditions of the milieu, so have the methods used. Lack of personnel and financial means made it impossible to use questionnaires. Besides, certain churches, for example, the Legio Maria and the African Catholic Legion (referred to as the A.C.L. hereafter) were suspicious of any recording of names or attempts to elicit information about people for fear that the government or the missions would interfere in their affairs. The Legio had good reason for this, since it had just had difficulties with the Kenya police. This source of information was therefore abandoned from the beginning after one fruitless attempt. The widely scattered living situation of the Luo presented another obstacle to using this method.

In addition, given the nature of the information sought, other methods appeared more appropriate. Participant observation,<sup>9</sup> especially as a beginning, furnished me with valuable information on behavior and allowed me to sort out information received orally. The idea of participation can be called into question. Doubtless it does, to some extent, falsify the action observed, but it is impossible for the presence of a researcher to remain unrecognized in such a context, where custom requires that he be received with respect (except in some communities of the Legio in which fear and suspicion have done away with the rules of hospitality). The presence of a visitor such as a prominent personage in the church or a member of another confession is not, moreover, an exceptional event, and a guest of this kind always receives special treatment, anticipated in the order of the ceremonies. On the other hand, in the majority of these movements, "He who is not with us is against us." The people expect a visitor to pray with the others present, at least to the point of imitating their attitudes of prayer and saying a few words when invited. One day when I waited for the arrival of a Legio bishop outside a chapel where the faithful were reciting the rosary, one of them asked me why I did not join with

everybody else and if it were "bad" in my eyes to pray in their company.

As a participant observer, then, I attended most of the churches mentioned, assisting at their weekly worship, prayer meetings, and various ceremonies either at their places of worship or in the homes of members. The only church with which I have not had direct contact is the African Israel Church Neneveh (to be referred to hereafter as the Israel Church) because I discovered it in North Mara only at the very end of my stay. The descriptions presented here are taken from the works of F. B. Welbourn and B. A. Ogot<sup>10</sup> and M. Whisson.<sup>11</sup> They too are oral accounts of local informants. However, I have visited the principal communities of all the others on their invitation and, on occasion, when I had already been introduced to their leaders, by a surprise visit.

A second source of information consisted in nondirective interviews during which my interlocutors gave their impressions on all sorts of questions relating to their religious adherence. I avoided asking questions which called for an exact answer in order to gather information in its context. These conversations took place all during the year 1966 with adults of all confessions—Catholics, Protestants, and members of the African churches. Among these people, some were chosen because of their function as catechists, local lay leaders, members of the clergy or hierarchy of the African churches. Others offered their testimony spontaneously and either came to see me or invited me to visit them. Finally, others were met by chance travelling the same road, eating at the same table, and told me their story and the legends and rumors that they knew. A third source of information came to complete these two and would merit exploitation in much greater depth than I have been able to do here: the recordings made during the ceremonies at which I assisted—testimonies, sermons, chants, and prayers. The translations of these, however, have been poorly done and it would be well to verify them before publication. For this reason, I have made use of them only indirectly.



The way the inquiry itself unfolded has influenced the research. The first weeks were given to making contact with the Legio Maria. It became apparent that this was a difficult approach. It would have been much better to start with the other churches and, once it had become evident that I was not a government spy, then I would have been more easily accepted by the Legio. But at that time I was still ignorant of the other movements. At the end of some weeks, however, my informants mentioned the existence of other independent groups and the groups themselves, having heard of my interest in African churches, invited me to attend their worship. Encountering these movements determined the rest of my research.

I was at once struck by the resemblance between their practices and organizational forms. It seemed to me of greater interest within the perspective set for me by the missionaries to look to their common characteristics rather than for their distinctive traits. I therefore systematically examined all the communities of the parish of Tatwe, the richest of the independent groups. In other parishes, I made a census of the centers of worship and visited the principal communities of each church.

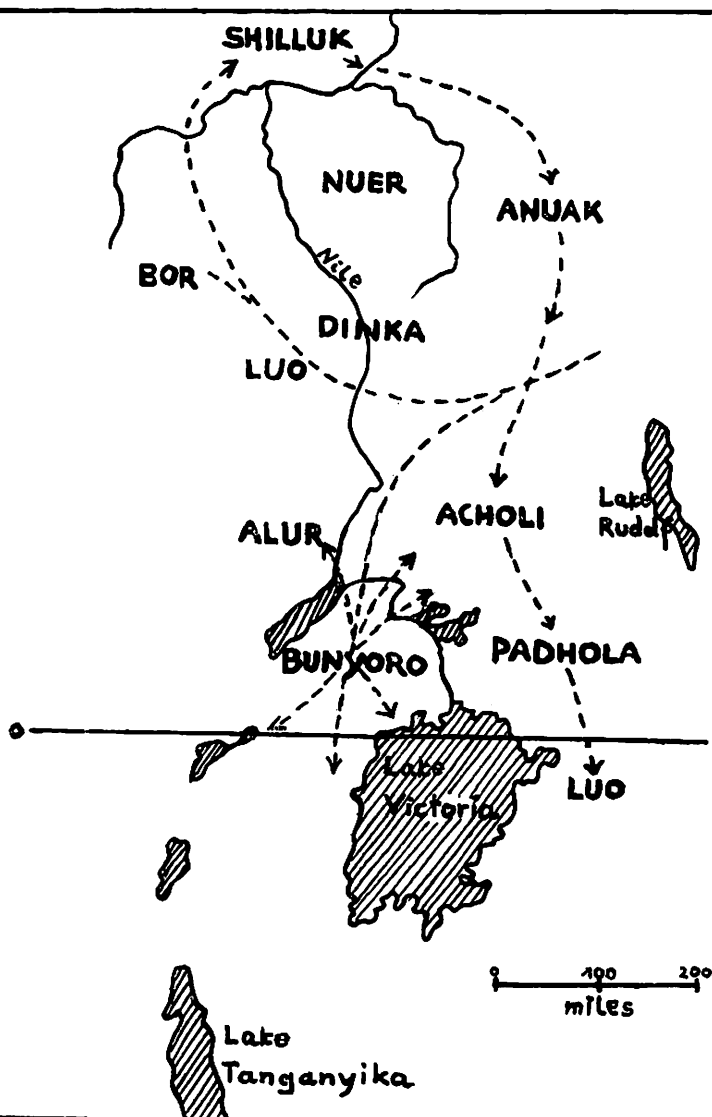
The particular conditions of this study have had a final and happy result. The conclusions of the report given to the missionaries at the end of the year 1966 provided a basis for an experiment in the field on the parish level, with the observations made on the African churches furnishing a starting point. The experiment consisted in forming basic communities in each neighborhood unit in order to plant the Catholic Church on the local level, to maintain contact with the Christians after baptism, and to find modes of expression better adapted to Luo culture. The experiment has made rapid progress and is being extended to neighboring parishes. At the beginning of the summer of 1969, the Maryknoll Fathers invited me to return to Tanzania to evaluate the results.<sup>12</sup> It has seemed appropriate to me, therefore, to add a final chapter in order to compare these new elements with the conclusions drawn from a study of the African churches

and to propose a definition of the basic community as found in the religious context of the Luo milieu.

## Notes

1. The text will clarify this expression later on.
2. Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society* (London: C. A. Watts, 1966), p.200.
3. For an exposition of the colonial situation see the articles of Balandier and Bastide cited in the bibliography.
4. Georges Balandier, *The Sociology of Black Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1970) uses the term "black church."
5. Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), p.2.
6. Joachim Wach, *Types of Religious Experience, Christian and Non-Christian* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 34.
7. Few documents are yet available about this movement. Beginning in 1964, it is mentioned in the daily papers, *Sunday Nation*, *Daily Nation*, *East African Standard*, as well as in a periodical, *The Reporter*. Vittorio Lanternari gives several paragraphs to it in his "Synchrétismes, messianismes, néotraditionalismes," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions*, 19 (1966): 99-116. An American researcher, Father Piect Dirven, of the Mill Hill Fathers, is writing a dissertation on the subject.
8. The Luo are the Nilotic people about whom this inquiry was conducted.
9. For this method, see the criticism of Paul Mercier, "Anthropologie sociale et culturelle," in *Ethnologie générale, Encyclopédie de la Pléiade*, (Paris: 1962).
10. *A Place to Feel at Home* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).
11. *Change and Challenge* (Nairobi: Christian Council of Kenya, 1966).
12. M. F. Perrin Jassy, *Forming Christian Communities*, (Uganda: Gaba Publications, 1970).

## MIGRATIONS OF NILOTIC PEOPLES



After B. A. Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo*

## CHAPTER ONE

### Luo Society

The African churches studied in this work developed in an ethnic group of Nilotic origin, the Luo of Kenya and Tanzania. Although it has not been possible for reasons of time and means to make a field study of Luo society itself, I feel it necessary to draw upon the literature on the subject for the elements of a general introduction concerning the political, social, economic, and religious organization of this people. The principal sources of information are the articles of Southall and Evans-Pritchard and the works of Audrey Butt, J. Crazzolaro, B. A. Ogot, and M. Whisson.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Origin and Migrations of the Luo*

The people called Nilotic are distributed principally between 12° north latitude and 4° south latitude and between 22° and 36° east longitude. They are dispersed in numerous groups and separated from one another by other peoples with whom they are often mixed so that it is difficult to identify them. To the north are the Dinka, the Nuer, the Shilluk, and the Anuak, constituting a block. In the center of the zone inhabited by the Nilotics are the Acholi, the Lango, the Alur, and the Jo-Paluo. Lastly, in the south a third group, scattered between the Nilo-Hamitics and the Bantu, is comprised chiefly of Luo.<sup>2</sup> (*See map on facing page.*)

The criterion for classifying ethnic groups in East Africa remains language, in spite of attempts to substitute for it some human type or common origin. A. N. Tucker divides the Nilotic languages into two groups, the Dinka-Nuer and

the Luo, the latter itself split into north and south Luo.<sup>3</sup> The Luo of Kenya and Tanzania belong to the second group and constitute the southernmost advance of the Nilotics.

Their land of origin would be near the Nuer's, to the west of Bahr-el-Gebel in the Sudan. Threatened by absorption or extinction by their neighbors because of their demographic increase and the multiplication of their herds, the Luo chose to emigrate southward in search of new pasturage. In general, Luo on the move have retained their original name when they have had to combat another group in order to settle in a territory. This is true of the Luo of Kavirondo under study here.

Around 1870 the Padhola and the Puwini invaded Budama in small numbers and without fighting a battle. Little by little, they extended their domain southward to the detriment of their Bantu neighbors, at first with the help of the Banyuli, later going ahead on their own. Some years afterward, the Puwini separated from the Padhola and settled in Alego. The thrust southward continued until British colonization. At that time the Luo occupied the region of Nyanza as far as the Mara River, while a small number of them set themselves up at the center of present-day Tanzania.

With 800,000 people according to the 1957 census, the Luo are, from a numerical point of view, the greatest Nilotic people. They are established in three districts<sup>4</sup> of the province of Nyanza on the northeast shore of Lake Victoria on either side of the Gulf of Kavirondo. They occupy the plains and hills for about fifty miles on each side of the Gulf and lineages are spread in a continuous fashion over the whole territory. Evans-Pritchard explains this situation by suggesting that "The southward migrations seem to have been across the Gulf from Myoma."<sup>5</sup> (For convenience, the Luo of Kavirondo will hereafter be referred to simply as the Luo.)

### *Political and Social Organization*

The largest unit to which the individual Luo belongs is "the people." All social relationships are defined in terms of

kinship and the bond which unites all Luo is their common ancestor, Ramogi, who directed their migration to the south as far as Kenya although, according to legend, he himself did not reach it.

However, there is no political authority capable of imposing itself upon the whole people. Myths about Luo origins lead us to assume that Ramogi filled the role of supreme chief at the time the Luo reached Kenya. This seems plausible, given their small numbers at this epoch and the necessity for a warrior chief to lead their struggle against powerful neighbors. But gradually, as lineages multiplied, the bonds between the groups were attenuated. In the end, it is chiefly language which is the basis for unity among the Luo, particularly in the case of the Bantu whom they have absorbed and who have become bilingual.

If the Luo have the feeling of belonging to one people it is not because any political or social organization exists at that level. The coalition of clans is the largest unit within which an embryonic organization can be found. It is usually composed of a principal clan to which others have attached themselves for protection against neighboring coalitions. The ancestor of the principal clan provides a rallying point and his name is the war cry of the coalition. Within the group, conflicts are normally settled by mediation.

Politically, Luo society seems decentralized, composed of little autonomous and competing units. Geographic and social mobility has been extreme and has allowed the more adventurous to rule the coalition temporarily or to conquer new lands from their neighbors.

### *Lineage and Clan*

Lineage and clan are patrilineal and exogamous. Both are systems of conduct transmitted generation by generation to all descendants of the same ancestor. The model of the lineage is the ideal family in which a man has many wives and each of his wives has many sons. Apprenticeship in the deportment proper to each lineage member is meant not only

to allow the new generation to take its place in the whole group but also to permit them to form new groups within the old. The actual structure of the lineage is partially renewed in each generation although the principles of renewal remain the same. In the clan, on the contrary, the formation of the individual looks to integrating him within a structure which remains unchanged: the clan is made to last forever and its origin is indistinguishable from that of the ethnic group. Clans are made up of lineages founded by ancestors belonging to different generations. The cohesion of the lineages depends on the size of the clan and its territorial dispersion.

Members of the same lineage must offer sacrifices to their ancestors together and help one another in case of necessity. They possess the land in common and each has a right to a holding of cultivatable land sufficient to maintain his family. Members of a lineage are bound to assist at the burial ceremonies of a fellow member and to participate in the ceremonies to the extent required of their degree of kinship with the dead. To shed the blood of a member of the same lineage is ritually dangerous. A murderer cannot be freed of his debt by a compensation of livestock. After purification, he must take the wives of the dead man and assure him of descendants.

The most important lineages have their own councils of elders who give judgments in the case of quarrels within the group and represent the group in case of conflict with other lineages. Authority is tied to genealogical seniority and the senior of the principal lineage in a locality holds, in addition to temporal authority, certain ritual powers.

### *Socio-Economic Aspects of the Familial Framework*

Although the Luo recognize that they have a common origin and belong to a clan and a lineage, their entire life used to be carried out within the framework of the extended family, the basic social unit, and the neighborhood, the basic geographical unit. The extended family included all the people living at the farm belonging to the head of the

family:<sup>6</sup> his wife or wives; his sons, their wives and children; sometimes his mother, his brothers, and his unmarried sisters. The principal farm was augmented by small adjacent units when the enclosure became too small to contain all the dwellings. An adult son who himself had adult sons could establish his own farm at some distance. But the break-up of the group came only at the death of the family head, when lands and cattle were divided among the sons, who could then found their own line.

The farm constituted an autonomous basic unit at once social and economic. It was completely under the authority of the head of the family, who had the disposition of the group's entire wealth. Still used today to designate the owner of a house, a field, or some object like a vehicle is the term "father."

The two principal sources of wealth were cattle and, after the epidemic of sleeping sickness which decimated the herds at the end of the last century and forced the Luo to become sedentary, the land.

*Cattle.* Cattle have retained a significant place in the domestic economy. They are shared by the women of the farm who use their milk to nourish their families but the men and boys are in charge of pasturing them. Formerly, this was their principal activity, for the herds gathered together by the lineage sometimes numbered more than a hundred animals and each household sent an armed man to defend the common patrimony.

Apparently there has always been an unstable equilibrium between the need to take the herds to new pastures and to keep them near the farms for security reasons. The inner arrangement of the farm shows the importance of cattle in Luo life. The *boma*, where the cattle are kept at night, is enclosed with crisscrossing stakes and tree trunks often more than six-and-a-half-feet high and is at the center of the farm. The dwellings are set up around it and form a shield between the *boma* and the outside enclosure of the farm. This arrangement ensures the cattle enclosed in the *boma* protection against savage beasts and, particularly, thieves. The entrance



to the *boma* is located opposite the entrance to the farm, facing the house of the head of the family, who in this way is ready to intervene in case of an attack during the night.

Before the epidemic of 1880, the Luo used the milk and blood of their cattle for nourishment. This was especially so for the young men training for war who had the opportunity to milk the cows while guarding the herds. The women had equal rights to milk the cows<sup>7</sup> which had been allotted to them by the head of the family to take care of the needs of their children. Meat was eaten only occasionally when the animals died of old age or were sacrificed for some big feast, a burial ceremony, a marriage, as an offering to the ancestors, or on the occasion of the visit of some notable guest.

Cattle were much more than a source of food. They were at the same time the principal means of exchange and the only form of capital. The entire capital was in the hands of the head of the family and consisted in the cattle received on the marriage of a daughter, through the natural increase of the herd, or by way of booty taken from an enemy. Provided that he did not abuse his herd and respected the rights of his household, the key to the prestige of the head of the household lay in his herd. Before British colonization imposed peace among the ethnic groups of Kavirondo, the prestige of a warrior rested on the number of cattle brought back from combat. His prestige was augmented if he fought with his herd behind him in order not only to increase his courage by his concern to protect what belonged to him but also to prevent his enemy from either carrying them off during his absence or refusing to meet him in open combat. If he were often victorious in such enterprises, supernatural powers were attributed to him and he became even more respected.

A man who owned great herds could contract numerous alliances with powerful families and his own power was reinforced by the number of his descendants. He could also win the favor of the local magician through rich presents and obtain from him the protection of supernatural forces in time of war and as a defense against the jealousy of his kindred.

On the other hand, on the economic plane properly so-called, cattle were a means of procuring wives, that is, of increasing the agricultural production of the farm. Creation of surplus farm products made it possible to trade with the outside, to receive with some ostentation numerous visitors, and, finally, to exchange different products for more heads of cattle, a means of augmenting a man's capital and multiplying the possibilities for the natural increase of his herd. However, it does not seem that ownership of cattle made possible the establishment of dynasties as the ownership of land did in other regions. The power of the chief died with him, as his cattle were divided among the children of his wives and each had to begin building up new capital for himself. Luo society was, therefore, socially very mobile because of the role played by the herds, which allowed for equalizing social relationships and gave to each man the possibility of gaining wealth and of lifting himself above his neighbors.

*Domestic Economy.* Farm activities are still essentially directed to the production of food. The chief crop is sorghum which is used for making the principal dish, *kuon*,<sup>8</sup> and beer, the drink for feasts and an important element in the diet of the old people. As circumstances allow, sim-sim and millet are cultivated together with green vegetables to go with the *kuon* when there is no meat or fish. These vegetables, cultivated between the millet plants or gathered in the wild state, are boiled or fried in the grease made in churning butter.

The quantity of food produced in each family depends on the number of adult females and surpluses are rare, for pregnancies and sicknesses reduce the vitality of the women a great part of the time. So it is that sterile women show themselves as indispensable in the community by producing more than they can consume, and the fear of being accused of sorcery because of their state redoubles their zeal for work. Farm surplus, if any, comes from millet and is made into beer rather than used to ameliorate the conditions of life

through commercialization or by freeing work hands for tasks which would be for the general good.

In agricultural matters, top authority belongs to the first wife of the head of the family. After her husband, she has precedence over all other residents on the farm, both men and women. She must give the signal for work in the fields and no one can work, sow, harvest, or make the first beer without her. This can seriously jeopardize the success of the harvest if she is too ill to begin the work at the right time. But her authority in agricultural affairs cannot be questioned.

Formerly there was no problem regarding land, for one woman could hardly cultivate more than three acres a year. In this area difficulties arose chiefly through redivision of pasture land and the damage done to the crops by the herds. Today the multiplication of lineages in the same territory without the possibility for expansion has created a situation of overpopulation in some areas. Each woman receives a holding from her husband which only she, her sons and their wives and descendants have a right to cultivate until the soil becomes exhausted. When the land is worn out, the family head chooses a new site and clears it for his wife. Women often cultivate holdings near each other, formerly for greater protection for their crops and themselves but in these days chiefly for company.

In such a system progress is hardly conceivable and in the past it has even been liable to sanction, for individual initiative and success were considered manifestations of sorcery. Each individual had to fill the role which fell to him according to age, sex, season, and the will of the elders, who controlled the economic system and had the support of supernatural forces. Later on we shall see how the economic initiatives of the colonizer transformed this situation.

Before the coming of the Westerner, the material possessions of the Luo were very few outside of their cattle. Only married people wore clothes and these were scant, made of hides, beads, and grass for warmth, for protection in combat, or simply for ornamentation or as a sign of respect on certain occasions.<sup>9</sup> The young wore only beads as ornamentation.

The only handicraft practiced among the Luo consisted in the making of heavy war shields. For a young man, it meant more to acquire one of these than a wife. The making of things for everyday use, such as wooden hoes, pots, and dwellings, were the work of individuals more skilled at these tasks than the other members of the family. They were not paid, but their work entered into the system of exchange of services which was at the base of social life. Work in iron was reserved for a few specialists, often of Bantu origin, and extended only to the making of arrow and spear heads, knives, and small bells for musicians and the favored cows of the family head.

The farm, a collectively owned property managed by the father of the family, was the place where both economic cooperation and division of work according to sex and age could both be seen at the same time. Each woman had her own holding but mutual help was normal and usual between wives of the same husband whenever tasks called for collective effort or in the case of illness or childbirth. Men worked together in clearing the land, in building dwellings, in hunting, in guarding the herds, and in defending their common goods. Moreover, cooperation could reach beyond the farm to the neighborhood if family units became too small to be able to carry out their various tasks adequately. Equilibrium in the social and geographic units was established according to the size of blood-related groups: when too large, they subdivided into smaller geographic units; when too small, they formed associations on the basis of proximity.

We shall return to the question of group size regarding communities founded on religious affiliation in the African churches and in the Catholic Church and the influence it exerts on the nature of relationships uniting group members.

### *The Role of the Individual*

Another characteristic of Luo social and economic organization consisted in the place and role each individual had in society according to age and sex. Each person felt that

he had a direct personal relationship with every other member of the social or geographical unit in question, a relationship which involved well-defined rights, duties, and sanctions.

From his earliest age, a child was included in a hierarchical structure based on genealogy. This situation was temporary for a woman since, on being married, she could find herself placed in a very different situation within her circle due to her husband's rank. For a man, however, genealogical seniority was, within the framework of the extended family, the key to power and wealth, and a man could never have more power than his father. The authority of father over son was absolute in all matters, and the curse pronounced by a father placed a son in a grave temporal and ritual situation. Further, custom prescribed that an old man could demand anything from a younger, who had to obey or be guilty of grave discourtesy.

Under these conditions, an ambitious younger man or a man gifted with a strong personality had to find a larger framework in which to exercise his abilities. Some forms of authority were open to him according to his capacities. Certain men could be chosen by popular consensus because of their wisdom and diplomatic qualities to settle the quarrels and solve the delicate problems which made trouble between members of different lineages and clans. The decisions of these "mediators" were respected in so far as they expressed the general sentiment. Other men, by their political skill, their success in combat, the alliances which they knew how to create, were able to become rallying points for their clan and gave impulse to initiatives which reached beyond the framework of the kinship group. These "charismatic leaders" attracted a following by force of personality. Finally, the diviners, specialists in dreams and magic, have always occupied an influential place because of their powers but they have often been considered as people apart, on the margin of society, inspiring fear rather than respect. A man who combined charismatic character and a reputation for

possessing magical powers was in a particularly favorable position to establish domination over a coalition of clans.

For a woman the first objective was marriage. This gave her adult status and the possibility of enhancing her condition as wife and mother. Her difficulties, however, were many and relations with her mother-in-law generally delicate.

Within her own lineage, all of a woman's male relatives were considered as her grandfathers, fathers, brothers, or sons, according to their genealogical situation. She had a right to the protection of the men of her own lineage until her marriage, after which she came under the guardianship of the men of her husband's lineage. Until the final ceremony of marriage (*riso*), she could return to her own home if she found herself ill-treated, and her family would receive her warmly, for she was a help on the farm and her husband had to pay the remainder of her dowry to her father.

Of all family relationships, those uniting a mother and her children were the closest, even after the children's marriage. A wife had to accept the fact that her mother-in-law would be first in her husband's heart as well as hold first place on the farm. A married woman also continued to love her mother more than her husband, especially if he worked at some distance away and she made frequent visits to her mother until her own children were big enough to assure her position in her husband's family. This attitude was doubtless reinforced by the practice of polygamy, but even in the monogamous family the children felt nearer to their mother who fed them and gave them their portion of land than to their father, the symbol of constraint and authority.

The relations between a woman and her mother-in-law were very important since a wife lived in the home of her husband's parents. As long as she did not give a son to the world, a woman's loyalty to her husband's lineage as well as her worth as a wife was open to question. Even after becoming a mother, she sometimes found it difficult to obtain land and especially cattle to support her husband and children, for her mother-in-law and the other women on the

farm were her competitors. She lived in a climate of constant struggle, and every check to her functioning as wife or mother could aggravate her situation. If the tension became insupportable, she expressed herself by having attacks of possession, by making accusations of sorceries, and even by fighting. As a last resort a young woman could leave her husband and go home to her parents, but then the dowry had to be returned. This was usually impossible as the dowry had been used to obtain marriages for the men of the lineage.

Wives of the same husband, together with their children, competed for the possession of the land, the use of the cattle, and the father's affection. This rivalry could be tempered by the association of the women in two different groups according to the equal or unequal status of their marriage. Within these groups mutual help in working on the farm and caring for the children, especially in the case of illness, was the rule. Good understanding between wives often depended on the attitude of their husband. If he treated them with equality they were better disposed to live together in agreement. In cases to the contrary, accusations of sorcery were not uncommon when a child fell ill or died, for such events were never attributed to natural causes.

This quick look at the social relationships within Luo society makes it possible to point out some of its essential traits. In the framework of the family and the lineage authority was a function of genealogical seniority. Each man and woman had a specific role to play according to age, sex, and kinship bonds with their associates. The individual was not free to act as he thought fit. He belonged to a network of relationships and ways of acting dictated and reinforced by tradition and the sanction of supernatural forces at the disposition of the family chiefs through the mediation of the ancestors. However, in spite of the exact definition of relationships between members of the lineage, occasions of conflict were numerous and their consequences could be grave. The quality most appreciated by the Luo was the gift of conciliation, and the source of power for a real chief came

less from domination by coercion than from skill in reconciling opposing parties.

Definitively, the stability and continuity of the system rested above all on the education of the young in the family milieu, which had in view forming adults capable of assuming all the roles which they would be called upon to fill during the course of their lives. It should be noted here that the Luo recognized no classes according to age and had no rites of initiation for young boys and girls. Passage into adulthood took place at marriage and was generally consecrated with the first child. Grandparents were responsible for the children's apprenticeship in customs and traditions; parents, uncles, older brothers and sisters introduced them to domestic skills and work.

Relationships were therefore well defined within the framework of the farm and the neighborhood and each knew his place and role there. However, in the measure in which the social or geographical units under consideration expanded, the deportment to be observed within it becomes less precise and relationships less stable, leaving more and more room for the initiative and personality of each member.

### *The Evolution of Society*

The term "traditional society" is not synonymous with stability and immutability. The societies with which ethnology is concerned are not fixed in their evolution. Evolution may be slow but the history of African peoples insofar as historians have been able to reconstruct it, shows that major transformations have occurred at one time or another during their existence. These brought about profound modifications in social structures and customs well before the peoples had encountered Western culture.

In the case of the Luo such an evolution—it could be called a revolution—took place shortly before the arrival of the Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century. The Luo, who up until then had been nomads and herdsmen,



found themselves forced by the destruction of their herds to adopt a new way of life and so became farmers and fishermen like their Bantu neighbors. This is what they were when the British discovered them and this is the way they have been described in previous pages after they had made a first adaptation of structures and customs to a new way of life with forms of production and consumption different from those of their nomadic period.

We need not conclude that the economic and social system changed in fundamentals. Cattle remained the principal wealth, the leaven of the economy, and the basis of social life even if no longer the chief means of nourishment. The economic equilibrium remained the same on the farm as it had been in the nomad family. It was a subsistence economy in which no one need die of hunger unless all were equally deprived of necessities. No attempt was made to produce a surplus except as additional foodstuff for the group and the necessity of cutting back on consumption during the year was not even considered. The art of living for the farming, sedentary Luo was linked up with his nomadic pastoral life. For him months of abundance and joy alternated with months of scarcity and sickness, but each year the ancestors would renew their beneficent influence and God, seeing the misery of men, would not forget to send rain.

A second revolution, introduced by the colonizer at the beginning of the century, has had much more profound consequences.

*Colonial Administration.* The first contact with the white invader was more or less peaceful, with no armed resistance. On the contrary, the Luo participated in the pacification of their neighbors and traditional enemies, the Gusii. Luo society, with little organization on the political plane, accepted without initial opposition the changes brought by the colonizer.

The British tried to apply to the Luo the indirect methods of administration which they had worked out successfully with ethnic groups who had centralized power.

In decentralized Luo society such a system was difficult to establish. The choice of two supreme chiefs, one for the east, one for the west of Nyanza, was a failure. On the other hand, where the district chiefs designated by the administration corresponded with the heads of the clans, they did exercise a certain authority over the lineages dispersed throughout their territories.

The situation created in this way, although apparently traditional, was entirely new. In fact, the role of the lineage and clan chiefs as well as of warrior leaders had never been to give orders and exercise compulsion to have them obeyed. A leader limited himself to expressing the general opinion, to settling conflicts, and to proposing new ideas without having any power, except of persuasion, to impose them. He had to be the symbol and expression of group unanimity under penalty of seeing the popular choice pass to another man more in accord with the tastes of all. Quite to the contrary, when British administrators chose a leader and made him their mouthpiece, they intended him to transmit orders and require that they be carried out even if this meant using force. Thus the traditional leaders stopped assuming their proper role, later taken over by politicians and labor leaders from a new viewpoint, so that the traditional leaders partially lost the confidence of the people, if not their respect. By using district leaders against other clan leaders who did not wish to collaborate with those who had taken over the country and by confiding to district leaders the task of levying taxes and recruiting workers, the administration was instrumental in promoting serious tensions between clans. These could no longer be resolved, as they had in the past, by war or cattle theft, since such practices were severely put down. Equilibrium between clans was therefore disrupted. This worked to the advantage of leaders supported by the colonizer. These were not necessarily identified with the clans which were dominant in the precolonial period. A profound malaise resulted.

Once the system was set up, the colonial power had to

organize for the development of the country by maintaining peace and encouraging work. The consequences of this policy were important.

In the traditional society, for example, the elders, heads of the family or of the lineage, controlled the use of collective resources and in particular the cattle necessary for marriage and the attainment of status as family head. The only means a young man had to acquire cattle except through the elders was to take them from an enemy or from a group whose leader had no claim on him. Success in an enterprise of this kind was also a source of prestige and a means of contracting advantageous alliances through which a man could reach a position of prominence. The practice allowed for great social mobility but presupposed a society divided into small independent and rival units. The arrival of the colonizer, who united the clans under his tutelage and forbade war and the theft of cattle, took away from young men at a single stroke every possibility of freeing themselves from the elders through traditional means. The opportunity for salaried work away from the region seemed an acceptable alternative to them and the disorganization of society was thereby accelerated.

Another aspect of the indirect consequences of the foreign legislator's policies concerned the partition of the land. The customary system of inheritance led to a continual parcelling out of the holdings of the lineage. This raised no difficulties during the precolonial period, for the land was abundant and the Luo moved from place to place frequently, as the family grew and the fertility of the soil became exhausted. But the British administration, by settling the boundaries of the sections and forbidding the movement of populations beyond the territories assigned to them—movements often accompanied by internal warfare or conflict with neighboring ethnic groups—created a land problem. In certain sections the population was augmented to the extent that individual rights fell much below the traditional minimum. In others, on the contrary, land was more than enough to

support the population and farm surpluses could be had. In this way inequalities were created between lineages and clans.

*Economic Changes.* The introduction of the tax in 1900 dealt the definitive blow, forcing a monetary economy on the society. The Luo had lost the greater part of their herds during the epidemic of the 1880's and had no farm surplus to speak of. They therefore had to find new sources of revenue to pay the tax and fall in with the economic changes desired by the colonizer. There were essentially two ways of making money, by cultivating nonconsumable commodities or by finding salaried work. The first had little success because of market fluctuations, lack of training and technical methods and, above all, a dislike of raising products not intended for consumption. The second corresponded better with the nomadic mentality of the Luo and attracted, and still attracts, a great number of young men to the point that the administration is concerned about the drain on local manual labor.

The introduction of the tax profoundly modified the orientation of domestic life by forcing people to get money. The interjection of the Luo into a monetary system introduced by the colonizer was reinforced by the appearance of European goods on the market through retail selling. Indians monopolized this activity during the first thirty years of British occupation and combined retail selling of articles for daily use with wholesale buying of industrial crops and farm surpluses. As a result, the Luo were forced to recover the control of commerce in Nyanza more for social than for economic reasons. Retail sales introduced into the domestic economy new needs which could only be satisfied with cash. Soap, matches, sugar, and kerosene became by degrees indispensable articles for farm life. Clothes too, unknown before colonization, became a necessity. Comparable development did not take place in industry. The discovery of gold led to intense activity for a few years but had no future as the veins were quickly exhausted. The lack of capital, of support, and above all, of a local power source discouraged

the installation of industries for a number of years and limited the possibilities for local employment.

The economic initiatives of the colonizer had an even greater influence than the political in transforming society through the introduction of money and above all, of taxes. At first the use of money was limited to the transactions made necessary by the Western presence but gradually it extended to more and more important goods and services. Today everything is bought except the land. Even the dowry of a woman can be paid in cash. As money is the personal property of whoever earns it, it is easy to capitalize it. The increase in the circulation of money means also a development of individualism and of inequalities in economic matters as well. Here too the colonial power has broken up the old solidarities and mechanisms which served to re-establish the equilibrium when a lineage member became too rich or too powerful. The problems raised by economic development cannot be solved in traditional ways and their extent puts them beyond the comprehension of most members of society.

By imposing an authoritative organization and by carving up the territory into portions which did not correspond to the decentralized structure of the Luo people, the administration prevented the establishment of more complex forms of government, of social structures, and even of religion which could have resulted from the settling of this nomadic people on the land. Luo society, being divided into small independent units, was all the more vulnerable to external influences.

On the other hand, the establishment of a larger society<sup>10</sup> in which peace between different and formerly independent groups was guaranteed by a power superior not only to each of them but to all of them together led to a dissociation in the Luo mind between power and responsibility. In the traditional contest a direct link existed between a man's degree of authority and his responsibilities. A man did not feel responsible for a collective as large as the ethnic or

national group and tended to follow his own particular interests when control of decisions affecting the life of the whole escaped him. Far from strengthening cohesion, the expansion of society destroyed the networks which had solidified society and created in people a feeling of powerlessness and isolation.

### *The Consequences of Colonization*

The consequences of colonization have been tremendous in all areas of Luo life. In the traditional society, the family lived under the tutelage of the elders. The introduction of taxes, the development of schooling, and the emigration of the young men in search of salaried work undermined the authority of the head of the family. When young men are able to procure money by working, they begin by trying to win their independence within the traditional framework, that is, by marrying without waiting for the consent of their elders. Then they discover the advantages and pleasures of the town and the acquisition of a wife takes second place in their considerations, giving way to the purchase of a bicycle or a radio. The development of a money economy has furthered the emancipation of the young. The increasing importance of cash in domestic life for the payment of taxes and school expenses, for the purchase of clothes and things for daily use, and the comparatively reduced part played by family wealth in traditional goods have brought about a progressive reversal of roles between young and old. The head of the family still controls the cattle and the land but the children no longer need these for their living. On the contrary, an old man needs his children to provide him with the cash indispensable for him to meet his obligations and lead a decent life.

When fathers and brothers work at a distance, young boys are left to themselves without authority or discipline, without tradition or example to guide their conduct. Young girls, deprived of all protection, are left without defense

against the men of their circle. These are often the less able and industrious, who have proved incapable of finding salaried work.

The authority of the elders over the young is further diminished by the weakening of family education and the development of schooling. As traditional learning loses importance, modern learning gains. It is at school that the young Luo learns what will be useful for him to make a living: a common language, English or Swahili, which his parents do not know; reading, writing, and arithmetic. As to spiritual traditions, particularly those concerning relations between the lineage or clan and the ancestors, missionary teaching has greatly reduced their influence. If beliefs in magical and demonic forces are found most intact in spite of the education received at school, the young, on the contrary, no longer fear the anger of ancestors invoked by their father. Children are less and less dependent on their seniors, whether in the economic, social, or cultural sphere. The family which was formerly refuge, model, and base for survival has been called into question as the young discover that they can have a way of life different from their father's or grandfather's. Relations between husbands and wives have suffered comparably. In the case of a polygamous family, the absence of the husband compromises good relations on the farm, for he represents the sole bond between rival wives and only he can make peace in the quarrels which frequently set them against one another. The women often complain both of the loneliness in which their husband has left them, at grips with a hostile world, and also of the material difficulties which they face when the head of the family is absent. When the land becomes used up he is not there to divide new portions for his wives to cultivate. When a dwelling has to be built or repaired he is not there to do it and his wives have no money to obtain a skilled man to take on the work. Money is lacking to buy clothing and consumer products such as meat, sugar, salt, and matches.

Bonds between husband and wife become attenuated

and she often returns to the home of her parents, where she consoles herself with other men. Juridically complicated situations result, for the woman wants her freedom but can obtain it only if her father can return the dowry, which is rarely the case. On his part, the husband is anxious to keep his wife, especially if she has children, in order to find a family and a functioning farm to which he can retire.

In relation to the deterioration of the family institution, we can see a regression in the traditional culture. Techniques and values were transmitted from one generation to another through the intermediary of family education. Today the traditional culture is no longer the only claimant to the children's attention. On the contrary, to the extent to which it is attached to a way of life which no longer seems desirable, it is relegated to second place. Little boys who no longer tend the herds do not have the taste or skill of their ancestors in caring for the animals. When they have received a few years of primary instruction, they often consider work on the land as beneath their dignity and capabilities. If they do not find salaried work, they simply live on the farm as parasites, maintained by a mother or wife, while waiting for luck to bring them easy and well-paid employment. Some even join organized bands of do-nothings who raid the farms and shops in regions far from police stations. Whisson emphasizes that the increase of crime parallels the increase of unemployment.

Western culture is acquiring greater and greater importance and is becoming the object of a veritable cult. For the Luo, knowledge is the power to win release from a condition he now considers miserable. The modern ideal is to work in a town, to live in a concrete house, and to benefit by all the facilities and means of entertainment introduced by the colonizer. For the founder of the Legio Maria paradise was like a European city. However, if the word *progress* is on every tongue, what is in mind is an evolution of society directly from agricultural underdevelopment to a third stage of superdevelopment, skipping a primary infrastructure and a



secondary intermediate stage. This attitude is characteristic of most of the young people who come out of primary school. They have accepted occidental culture as an ideal life, an objective, but not as a method of evolution. This divorce between ends and means is one of the elements which particularly favors the appearance of African churches.

However, the whole population no longer has one world view and one system of values as they used to in the traditional society. The development of education, the opening up of the economy to money and Western goods, have divided the Luo into educated and illiterate, rich and poor, and endowed these inequalities with a permanent character. According to people's education, practical experience of the modern world, and social position, they can be graded in four cultural levels. On the first level are the people integrated in the traditional milieu who have received little or no schooling and have never been away from their rural area. On the second level are those who have attended school for about four years, those who have travelled as migrant workers or soldiers, those who have managed to set up a small trade, and, in a general way, all who have had some experience, theoretical or practical, with modern culture while living in the traditional milieu. The third level includes the wage-earners on the second or third portion of the salary scale and all those who live in a nontraditional milieu in permanent contact with modern ideas and techniques. The fourth level consists in the elite, made up of university people, politicians, higher functionaries, and all who exert influence on a national scale.

This classification needs refinement and the distinctions between one level and another are not so definite. However, each corresponds with one particular outlook on the world and communication between them is difficult. A man can rarely lift himself up to a higher level for lack of material or intellectual resources or simply because he has passed school age. At this point, it is worthwhile calling attention to the fact that the founders and members of the African churches

come for the most part from the first and second level, rarely from the third or fourth. These movements have come about as remedies to these divisions and to the frustrations which they engender. Revelations and divine powers permit the humble and illiterate to be considered the equals and even the superiors of the more learned and powerful of the world.

### *Independence*

Colonization brought about a rupture in traditional solidarity and equilibrium, and society was submitted to the influence of forces and caught up in an evolution which its members could neither understand nor control. The independence of Tanzania on December 10 and Kenya on December 12, 1963, far from interrupting this process, accelerated it, increasing internal and external tensions.

The Luo were, in fact, more successful than other ethnic groups in getting along with the colonizer and did not participate actively in the struggle for national liberation. There were several reasons for this. First of all, European colonials had not settled in the lands of the Luo because of the alternation of floods and droughts there. The lowlands are regularly inundated each rainy season and then become so parched during the dry that no commercial farming is possible. Moreover, the shores of Lake Victoria, unlike the mountainous regions situated to the north and east of Nyanza, are particularly unhealthy. Contact between colonials and Luo took place away from home in the lands of neighboring ethnic groups and, by and large, the Luo benefited from the advantages of colonization. If Nyanza was poorly provided for with schools, hospitals, roads, and industries because Europeans were not established there, contrariwise, the number of Luo employed outside their own territory was large in comparison to the other peoples of Kenya. They had participated actively in pacification, a number were enrolled in the army and the police, and they found their way into all kinds of administrative positions and

enterprises, profiting by the ostracism applied to rebellious ethnic groups.

The triumph of Jomo Kenyatta and the independence of Kenya dealt a palpable blow to their preponderance in administration, while the departure of the colonials deprived a number of workers of their living. On the other hand, when the independent government of Kenya took over the colonizer's plans and methods of development, the hostility which these had aroused was referred in full to their new promoters, that is, to the African administrators. With the independence of Kenya, where the Luo had considerable importance on the national level, they became a force of opposition. The tension between Luo and non-Luo has other causes. For example, the Luo complain of having been neglected in the dispensation of influential posts in comparison to other groups better represented in the government. The others are jealous of the Luo because their intelligence and know-how continues to win them preference in many employments.

Under these conditions, the birth of the Legio Maria<sup>11</sup> was first considered a largely political happening. In reality, the new movement had no official political activities in spite of some fears, and perhaps some hopes, to the contrary.<sup>12</sup>

The Luo of North Mara, Tanzania, with whom we are chiefly concerned, found themselves in a very different position, for they are a tiny minority in comparison to the whole population. They do not face the same possibilities and problems as the Luo of Kenya in spite of the fact that there are constant relations between the two sides of the border. For this reason a separate study of their situation will be made in the following chapter.

### *Religion and Beliefs*

Just as the political, social, and economic organization has been upset by colonization, so the beliefs and ethics of

the Luo have suffered shock from their encounter with the West.

The religious life of the Luo, so fused with daily life that it gave meaning to the humblest gesture, seemed to those who first observed it to be entirely wanting in philosophic depth and spiritual elevation. Some went so far as to say that it consisted simply in asking for a good day each morning by spitting in the direction of the rising sun. As a matter of fact, religion was the armor of the social order, the instrument for controlling natural phenomena, the means of explaining the mysteries of life and death. Beliefs did not constitute a structured and logical whole, however, for the need for a coherent global explanation of the world had not made itself felt. As J. C. Froelich emphasizes, "animist metaphysics easily entertains the coexistence of concepts which to us seem contradictory." <sup>13</sup>

The organization and functioning of traditional society were inseparable from a vision of the world and of religion. These rested upon two fundamental ideas: first, a cyclic conception of evolution, which permitted each generation to attain fullness of being through the ideal development of the family according to the model already described and through an abundance of traditional consumer goods;<sup>14</sup> secondly, a simultaneous perception of a fundamental, harmonious world order together with a disorder forever endangering the expected "normal" unfolding of existence.<sup>15</sup>

The principle of order manifested itself in all regular cycles such as the alternation of day and night and the return of the seasons and was associated with the idea of an all-powerful creator God. This idea has remained rather imprecise in the Luo mind. Even the name this God bears, Nyasaye or Nyasi,<sup>16</sup> is thought to be of Bantu origin. He manifests himself in all extraordinary things: the sun, the moon, the huge rocks, the great serpents, the elephants, and all the miracles of nature. He is considered as the origin of life which he continues to dispense through sun and rain. He

is the reason for universal order. The Luo do not adore the sun but see in it the supreme expression of the omnipotence and majesty of God. Traditionally, all can pray to Nyasaye directly without going through religious specialists. They can ask for his help in great catastrophes or simply in daily life but make no offerings to him, contrary to the worship they tender other supernatural beings. Men cannot constrain God to accord them favors as they can coerce inferior spirits, who look to human beings to offer them sacrifices and provide them with bodies to inhabit. Daily prayer is offered to the rising sun, a short supplication reinforced by spitting in that direction. Only the rainmakers, who address themselves to God directly in the exercise of their art, have a more elaborate prayer capable of binding the divine will.

Nyasaye dispenses life, health, and wealth to those who are obedient to custom. He gives power to those who seek to control the lower spirits. But he favors only good, never evil, undertakings. His function seems to be the maintenance of order and harmony rather than the defeat of evil. He is not its source and it does not fall within his jurisdiction. The existence of God thus accounts for the order of the world but does not explain the contradictory phenomena which trouble it—sickness, drought, and death. Other beings are made responsible for them and men appeal to them, not to God, to re-establish the vital cycle and repair the evil wrought. The nature and attributes of these powers are the more clearly defined the closer their relations are with men.

*Nonhuman Spirits.* Men are not the only beings on earth. Nature spirits exist and live in the rocks, the rivers, Lake Victoria, the euphorbia. These spirits search for men and try to possess them. Possession is not bad in itself, for it brings appreciated gifts, the gifts of prophecy and of tongues, the power of controlling the spirits of nature. However, uncontrolled, it is dangerous as then the spirits act with violence and incoherence in the bodies of their hosts, doing harm to them and to those around them. There are experts capable of disciplining these manifestations with the help of a

generally long and costly treatment and the accompanying maladies disappear when the patient has gained control over the spirit which possesses him.<sup>17</sup>

*The Ancestors.* Ancestors play an active role in society. They are invoked to keep evil forces away but also because their anger is often held accountable for the misfortunes which strike the community. An ancestor retains his human character in the hereafter. He manifests himself in dreams and through diviners as intermediaries, making known his name and his wishes. Then sacrifice is offered to him or his name is given to a baby. People entitled to intercede with the ancestors are very few in number and the power to do so strengthens the authority of family heads who can call down the punishments of the ancestors on their children and descendants. If the spirits of the dead can be held responsible for misfortune, sickness, and even death, they are also the link between different segments of the lineages, the clans, and the whole Luo people. Each group is distinguished from the others by its own ancestor and feels tied to the others through a common ancestor, and Ramogi is the ancestor of all.

The dead are especially active around the anniversary of their death and sometimes annual feasts are observed for notables who have died. The cult of ancestors expresses the needs of the living first to be protected from their anger and vengeance and beyond that to win their favor in the undertakings and trials of daily life.

*Magicians and Sorcerers.* Besides the notion of supernatural beings who manifest a will of their own and must be implored or threatened or disciplined by men, there exists the idea of blind and impersonal forces capable of being manipulated by magicians and sorcerers. Things that happen with no apparent cause are attributed to them and it is possible to acquire some control over these forces by appealing to supernatural beings or by using techniques which are directly effective.

The Luo in particular believe in luck (*were*)<sup>18</sup> which

governs their destiny without their own responsibility being involved. If their enterprises fail, even though it is clearly through their own fault, it is due to bad luck. Inversely, if an undertaking succeeds, it is because their luck is good. This idea almost completely eliminates the thought of individual responsibility and expresses the helplessness of men when facing life deprived of the powers of the hereafter, of seers and magicians. The more the forces governing our present-day world escape the understanding of the Luo, the greater credence he gives to luck.

*Religious and Social Life.* Beliefs and practices relating to the supernatural world used to play a considerable role in Luo society. They served to explain the mysteries of the universe and the laws which govern its functioning; they lay down the norms for the relations between a man and the world and between a man and his fellow men. Anomalies that appeared as life unfolded were codified in their manifestations, their causes, and their consequences and could be corrected by appropriate techniques. Each phenomenon was susceptible of many interpretations. In this way, if a first tentative solution failed, recourse could be had to different methods without weakening confidence in the specialists and the traditional techniques.

Sometimes exceptional men had qualities or particular defects which prevented them from being integrated within their group. They had to find a place in the community. Social stability depended on it. Many of them had recourse to the exercise of spiritual techniques as a form of expression appropriate to their talents and, with the approval of the group, used them to attain power and status above the ordinary.

Good and evil took on a special meaning in this view. The good was what sustained life; the evil, what caused a break in the harmony and continuity of the vital cycle. Every breach had to be followed by reparation so that the thread of existence, temporarily broken, might be renewed. For the Luo, evil brought punishment automatically, without the

necessity for intervention by a definite supernatural power but simply through the play of vital forces. Moreover, punishment overtook the innocent as often as the guilty. The consequences of an evil action, however, immediately revealed the culprit and the nature of his sin. So it was that a baby conceived by an incestuous relationship would be delivered by breach birth or be born an albino or with web feet and had to be strangled at birth. Likewise, if a young married woman did not observe the prohibitions concerning her mother-in-law, the latter could lose her fertility, already endangered by the menopause. Such a conception of evil and its consequences called for scrupulous observance of the rules of social life and so favored the stability of the group.

The adherence of the Luo to these beliefs was a means of establishing interdependence among the members of society, and each did depend on the others for security. To a communion of blood was added a communion of spirits which reinforced the bonds of kinship and its duties and gave to daily life a spiritual dimension. Believing and living were one. Connections between the world of human beings and the world of spirits were permanent and every action undertaken in one had inevitable repercussions in the other. In the same way, the activities of one member of the community concerned everybody in it and could have consequences for each. This interdependence was the very foundation of society and the absence of regular rituals in a group's relations with God and the higher powers, far from indicating indifference in religious matters, attested to the intimacy and permanence of its connections with the spiritual world.

### *The Influence of the Missionary Churches*

The political and economic revolution brought about by the colonizer would not have had as profound consequences as it did, had it not been accompanied by the efforts of schoolmaster and missionary to introduce Western religion



and culture. In many cases the missionary churches exerted themselves to protect the Luo against certain arbitrary initiatives of the local administration. However, for the most part, they were associated with it in the work of hastening the transformation of society and the development of the country. Adoption of Western customs and teaching seemed indispensable to a true understanding and practice of Christianity.

From the beginning the message of the missionary churches was presented as a complete renewal of a way of life not susceptible to integration within existing society. The religion offered by the missionaries is based on a book and cannot be completely lived without a minimum of intellectual capacity and knowledge. Neither can it bear its best fruit among an illiterate people. To achieve that, schooling must go hand in hand with evangelization. Likewise, people need to be relieved of their most pressing material cares in order to have "an interior life," to rise above the mundane and become aware of the divine. For this to be possible, their greatest physical miseries had to be alleviated through medical activity and economic development. This would also make it possible to form local churches capable of giving their ministers sufficient education, of building places of worship, schools, and hospitals, of creating a press, and, in a general way, of growing in stature and depth. This was the thinking of most of the missionary churches, which undertook to transform Luo society by breathing into it a new faith.

As early as 1878, Leo XIII extended the activities of the Society of the White Fathers to Central Africa in order to allow the Catholic Church to compete with the Anglican Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.). The White Fathers established themselves in Tanganyika at Tabora, then at Bukumbi and Kibanga. Among the Luo were the Mill Hill Fathers who came to Kisumu from Uganda in 1904. During this time, the C.M.S., which was also established in Uganda, sent missionaries to Maseno and later to Butere. Even today

these two societies are the most important among the Luo. Their rivalry has divided the people and aggravated the disorder caused by colonization. The arrival of other missions later on further complicated the situation.<sup>19</sup>

Conversions multiplied at a rapid rate between 1914 and 1944. In 1938 Christians formed 8 percent of the population in Kenya, 10 percent in Tanganyika, and 25 percent in Uganda. Catholics alone went from 300,000 in 1914 to 1,000,000 in 1938 to 1,700,000 in 1946 while the Anglicans counted 750,000 at the same date. The other churches were much less important—the Lutherans in Tanganyika, the Presbyterians in Kenya, the African Inland Missions, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Methodists, and others.<sup>20</sup>

The missionaries chose instruction and evangelization as their two principal activities. In all the schools religious teaching occupied a place of importance. However, missionary preaching was not addressed just to children but to adults as well and reached a very wide public. Its influence on daily life was perhaps less deep than that of instruction but from the beginning Christian ideas had a much wider diffusion than Western notions of progress and development.

The two principal missionary organizations given to the evangelization of Nyanza were the Anglican C.M.S. and the Catholic society of the Mill Hill Fathers. The former was the first to be implanted among the Luo and the school at Maseno has the highest reputation throughout the province. Anglican parishes were very large, supervised by one European pastor, who directed the activities of local catechists. The Catholics, on the contrary, established a network of smaller parishes sparked by priests who had qualifications equal to those practicing their ministry in metropolitan parishes. The other missionary churches at work in Nyanza exercised a more limited and much more recent influence—the Mennonites, the Adventists, the Pentecostal Assemblies, the Church of God, the African Inland Mission, and others.<sup>21</sup>

In the traditional society, a Luo had no choice of religion. Being born into a family, a lineage, a clan, prescribed

for each individual the ancestors to whom he owed respect and obedience through the mediation of the head of the line.<sup>22</sup> The Christian religion, on the contrary, is offered to everybody and presented as a remedy for all the evils of the world, and the Luo were converted en masse. But these conversions, as missionaries themselves acknowledge, remained superficial. The majority of new Christians continued to live according to their customs, practicing polygamy, performing the traditional ceremonies of mourning, etc. and when a great number of them found themselves refused the sacraments, they gave up attending services and contributing to the support of the cult.

However, the ideas that had been diffused made their way into Luo minds. The time came when the Luo made a comparison between the behavior of Europeans and the teaching of missionary churches. The attitude of Westerners in regard to Africans seemed contrary to what their religions advocated and from that the Luo reached the conclusion that, if you wanted to succeed in the modern world, it was necessary not to take Christian principles literally. Then, too, the multiplication of missionary societies confused them. All white men were said to be Christians but belonged to different churches, depending on their national origin. Most Catholic priests were Dutch; the Anglicans were English; the other Protestants, American. Differences between the churches were attributed to ethnic differences so that their very plurality encouraged the creation of independent African churches, first intended just for the Luo but thereafter theoretically open to all Africans and even to whites.<sup>23</sup> So it was that missionary preaching was associated indirectly with the origin of the challenge to colonial power and the birth of an independent African Christianity.

The teaching of the missionaries had exercised a much deeper influence than even these immediate consequences make evident. Through it a whole value system penetrated Luo civilization. The more closely supernatural forces had been linked to earthly events in the traditional conception,

the more thoroughly did the new value system affect Luo thinking. The Christian religion introduced by the colonizer seemed like an answer to the problems born of colonization. Through instruction people could learn about evolution and look for solutions together; in Christianity they could find new principles of fellowship and a new ideal on which to found society. The Luo understood the new religion, particularly as found in the African churches, as a dynamic force for social reconstruction and cultural renovation.

### *Survival of Traditional Beliefs and Practices*

The transformation of the economic and social organization under Western influence has been outlined. A like attempt can be made in regard to beliefs and practices relative to the supernatural world, thanks in particular to the study of the African churches, in which the faithful can give free rein to the spontaneous expression of their religious thoughts.

What remains today of beliefs and practices among the Luo of North Mara is rather difficult to define. In the traditional society they were intimately linked with daily living and every moment of life on earth had a double perspective, at once material and spiritual. In the measure in which they have preserved the essential themes and solemn occasions which characterized their mode of life before modern evolution, the Luo maintain their beliefs and practices. Where they do this in spite of Western influence, these beliefs and practices continue to give dynamism to everyday life and to serve as the foundation for a conception of the universe.

Among the practices which remain alive among the Luo of North Mara, two in particular have resisted the efforts of missionaries to Christianize them. They have to do with marriages and funerals. These two ceremonies have considerable importance in social life and include rituals in which all kinsmen and all relations by marriage participate. Even today

Luo do not hesitate to go hundreds of miles to attend the funeral of a near relative. Their desire to be present is intensified by the fact that he who remains away would probably be accused of having caused the death of the deceased by magical means. Missionaries have tried without success to introduce a Christian rite celebrated in church, but most of the faithful continue to celebrate marriages and burials at the farmstead according to custom.

The Luo retain beliefs and practices that stem from social life. Marriage was a contract established not between two persons but between two families, sealed by an exchange of presents and the relinquishment of a woman. It was not mutual consent or physical union which made the marriage but the transfer of a woman from her father's family to the family of her husband. Moreover, the basis of the family was not the couple but the woman and her children and, at a higher level, the man, his wives, and their children. Now Christian marriage, in the view of Western society, places the accent on the union of man and woman considered as free, independent, and responsible beings. This is not the case for the majority of Luo. Even if the authority and prerogatives of the family head have greatly diminished from the absolute control which he formerly exercised over his children and the others living on the farm, individualism and initiative are still traits of character but little developed among the young. It is the rule that all members of a family be concerned with what happens to any one of them and they can bring pressure to bear in one way or another. More than enduring beliefs, it is the inability to go against the directives of the group which serves as the best safeguard of traditions regarding marriage.

Funerals present us with the opposite phenomenon. The continuance of traditional practices is directly tied to the persistence of beliefs in the hereafter. The view held as to man's place in society is not the cause in this case but rather the conception of death and of the relationships established between the dead and their descendants. In order for the soul of the deceased to go forth in peace and not return to trouble

his descendants, his burial ceremonies must be carried out correctly. The survival of the soul is a reality for the Luo of North Mara and all believe that the dead can come back to haunt or possess their descendants. It is not rare in the African churches to hear one of the faithful complain of being tormented by the spirit of his grandfather and ask to be exorcised. Funerals must therefore be celebrated with all necessary display.

When a death takes place, the cries and lamentations of the relatives can be heard for miles around for about a week. The ceremonies last for several weeks after the interment and each mourns the deceased according to a ritual fixed by custom depending on the degree of kinship with him. A husband or wife wears the clothing of the dead and sits in silence. The children and the mother also wear his clothing and go about the farm making mournful lamentation. Men of the household brandish their lances, utter loud cries, then drive their lances into the roof of the dead man's house. They lead their herds and ride their favorite animals over the grave. Each brings an offering to the family in keeping with his degree of kinship with the dead. During eight to fifteen days, more than a hundred people are gathered at the farm, eating, drinking, talking, laughing, and weeping. Professional musicians and dancers are engaged for the occasion in order to divert the visitors. Public ceremonies are sometimes preceded by certain practices meant to assure the repose of the deceased in case of premature death. Thus a pregnant woman must be delivered of the child who had died with her before she is buried. Such practices are intended to deliver the soul from its earthly bonds or desires, and protect near relations from the anger, vengeance, or bitterness of the dead.

The Christian doctrine of the immortality of the soul is readily accepted by the Luo. However, their conception of death, of the survival of human spirits and their role in relation to the living, is fundamentally different from Christian thought. For this reason they willingly accept having the priest come to bless the grave and pray for the

dead but they continue to take all the customary precautions so that the spirit of the deceased will not come to trouble his descendants. The important thing is to satisfy the dead and to renew the flow of life on earth. To do this it is not necessary to address God, and the Christian ritual can only be a complement to the traditional rite. Besides, the church ceremony, in addition to the material problems which it raises, is far from offering the participants the possibilities of expressing themselves and of renewing social ties afforded by the customary form of funeral services. The rites accompanying death are a living reflection of the culture and society. They manifest, too, the permanence of beliefs concerning the relationship of men with the supernatural world and their coexistence with Christian ideas.

Belief in magic and sorcery likewise continue to exist in North Mara but, although accusations are not rare in this sphere, there never occur among the Luo those waves of terror and violence that happen in other regions of Africa. Even the Legio Maria, the most important of the African churches studied here, although it has set itself against sorcerers and magicians, does not seek to punish the accused but only requires that if they admit using suspicious objects they burn these in public and be exorcised themselves.

The diviner-magicians are numerous and their consultants include people with some education as well as the illiterate. Fear of modern life, anxiety in the face of change and the difficulties of daily life, the apparent disjointedness of the forces controlling success or misery, all serve to drive people in search of some means capable of influencing fate, luck. But magic can also be used to secure vengeance on an enemy or riddance of a rival. Simeo Ondeto, the founder of the Legio Maria, recounts with a wealth of detail how his enemies accomplished his death through magical means, after which he went up to heaven and arose to accomplish the will of God. For good or ill, magic still claims its due.

These few examples illustrate the larger problem of cultural continuity. Some institutions continue, others dis-

appear, and we can find in the African churches, in a modified but recognizable form, important traditional beliefs and practices.

Possession in particular played a considerable role in the life of women. When the tensions of daily life became intolerable, especially for a sterile woman who could be accused by her in-laws of being a sorceress, the person so threatened could be seized by an attack of hysteria. She then had to be entrusted to a specialist who took care of her for some weeks with baths, infusions, and rest. She was returned to her family upon payment of several head of cattle as a sort of supplementary dowry payed to the spirit who possessed her and whom the specialist taught her to control. She had to consecrate certain objects to it and give herself up to it each day during a rhythm dance with consecrated gourds filled with grain. Whisson, who gives an account of such a case, writes about the treatment: "... the cure, bringing to bear the force of social integration upon a member of the society whose psychological integration is incomplete or unsatisfactory, uses both physical and spiritual pressure to enable her to fulfill her proper role."<sup>24</sup>

In the African churches we meet the same principles in a slightly different form. Possession shows itself through the same symptoms as in the traditional situation, and is held responsible for the evil afflicting the person. Recovery is not achieved, however, through control of and compensation to the spirit. On the contrary, the spirit is exorcised. Traditional possession was a source of appreciated gifts, once control over the spirit had been established. Divination, especially, was esteemed. Today these gifts must come, not from any inferior spirit, automatically rejected as belonging to the category of demons, but only from the Holy Spirit. The Christian's dreams, intuitions, and gift of prophecy replace the diviner's and have no need to express themselves through material means and devices (gourds, incantations, seeds, sticks) which were part of the diviner's paraphernalia. Here an essential point of discontinuity is reached between



traditional beliefs and the new tenets expressed in the African churches. It concerns the public nature of the powers accorded to their faithful in contrast to the secret character of traditional relations with the supernatural world. Here are some examples: the disappearance of the practice of giving a child a secret name at birth; the efficacy of open and collective prayers as opposed to occult formulas; the power of groups which increases with the number of initiates in contrast to the traditional power reserved to a few; the importance accorded to direct inspiration and to communication with the spiritual world which is available to all instead of being reserved to a specialist, whether diviner or head of the family.

Without wishing to go into detail about the problem of cultural continuity and discontinuity, which would require an in-depth study of the traditional situation, it can be said that beliefs and practices continue to the extent to which they remain linked up with present-day life. Those which closely touch men and their families retain their reality, like marriage, burial services, and the habitual manifestations of magic and sorcery. On the contrary, those which refer to the whole Luo people; to rhythms which are no longer of prime importance in the life of individuals; to the physical environment, which seems less extraordinary today in relation to the prodigies of Western civilization: all these are disappearing little by little.

Among them are the myths about the origin and creation of the world, now unknown to the children and replaced by the myth of Genesis; the cult of clan and lineage ancestors, in the measure in which society has grown out of all proportion to its precolonial structure; belief in the protector of the faithful, the mythical serpent of Lake Victoria, which has given place to Christ, savior of the poor and the oppressed; agricultural rites, vanishing because of the development of paid employment and a money economy, both of which have upset the priorities and organization of agricultural tasks.

Under these conditions, it is less particular practices and

beliefs that continue than a collective state of mind regarding the world. Under both its aspects, physical and supernatural, it is thought of as an ensemble of forces, formerly identifiable and amenable to influence but today beyond man's control. Some seek the key to their individual and collective evils in magic and accusations of sorcery. Others turn to a messianic Christianity in which the Savior comes to accomplish what men cannot do by themselves, separating good from bad, restoring order in the universe, re-establishing harmony in daily life. Most seek assurance on all levels, from magicians, from ancestors, and from God in the hope of regaining control over the forces which wield power over their destiny.

## Notes

1. See the Bibliography.
2. See Map 1.
3. A. N. Tucker and M. A. Bryan, *Handbook of African Languages*, Part 3, "The Non-Bantu Languages of Northeastern Africa" (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 402-442.
4. A "district" corresponds to a French "department."
5. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "Two Tribes and Clans," *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal* 7 (London: Oxford University Press, 1949): 25.
6. Luo normally lived in a dispersed fashion in farms several hundred yards or even a mile or more from one another.
7. This is rather unusual among pastoral people.
8. *Kuon* is a thick paste, prepared by cooking flour in boiling water and stirring it with a spoon until it forms a ball.
9. For example, a man must cover his genitals before appearing before his mother-in-law.
10. On this question see Georges Balandier, *The Sociology of Black Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1970).
11. This is one of the most important African churches in Kenya at the present time. In 1964-65, the Nairobi daily papers estimated the number of its adherents as 60,000.

12. The question was debated during 1964-65, as the following quotations from the daily papers of that time show:

*Daily Nation*, May 2, 1964: "The K.A.N.U. member for Busia, Mr. James Osogo, yesterday called for a ban on Maria Legio, a religious sect which preaches that the end of the world is near . . . 'It has been alleged by some Christian Church leaders that the sect is connected with K.A.N.U. I have denied this allegation in my constituency,' he said."

*Daily Nation*, June 25, 1964: "The Ministry for Home Affairs (Mr. Daniel Moss) was satisfied that at the moment the Legio Maria sect in the Ynanza Region was not a political sect. . . . Asked whether he was aware that the sect was claiming it was a national movement supported by the Kenya Government, Mr. Moss said it was being watched very carefully."

*Daily Nation*, July 1, 1964: "The Minister for Home Affairs, Mr. Oginga Odinga, told the House of representatives yesterday (that) . . . the Government made a 'very careful investigation' of the sect and has come to the conclusion that . . . 'they are not political in their behaviour or movement' . . . adding that the Government believed them to be 'harmless.' "

13. J. C. Froelich, *Nouveaux Dieux d'Afrique* (Paris: De l'Orante, 1969), p. 32.

14. This conception has been pointed out by a number of authors and is opposed to the idea of "a society of evolutionary dynamism," according to the expression used by M. I. Pereira De Queiroz, *Reforme et Révolution dans les Sociétés Traditionnelles* (Paris: Anthropos, 1968), p. 19.

15. J. C. Froelich, *Animismes* (Paris: De l'Orante, 1964) p. 64, writes: "Nature is a harmonious order, but its equilibrium can be upset."

16. Transcriptions of this word differ with different authors.

17. M. Whisson, *Change and Challenge* (Nairobi: Christian Council of Kenya, 1966), pp. 9-12 brings out that the African churches use similar procedures and use the same kind of psychological and physical pressure in the ritual of exorcism.

18. According to Bishop L. C. Usher-Wilson, this word serves to designate the supreme being in two neighboring ethnic groups, the Kitosh and the Bagishu, who are found on both sides of the border between Kenya and Uganda. "Dini ya Misambwa," *Uganda Journal* 16 (1952): 125-129.

19. On the development of missionary activity in East Africa, see R. Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London: Longmans, Green, 1965).

20. Parker, 'Interpretative Survey of the World Mission of the

Christian Churches" (London, 1938), quoted in R. Oliver. *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*.

21. F. B. Welbourn and B. A. Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 4.

22. Froelich, *Animismes*, p. 121: "These cults are reserved to a certain category of individuals linked by kinship and descent; conversion is practically unknown, it is only possible by adoption or 'naturalization.' "

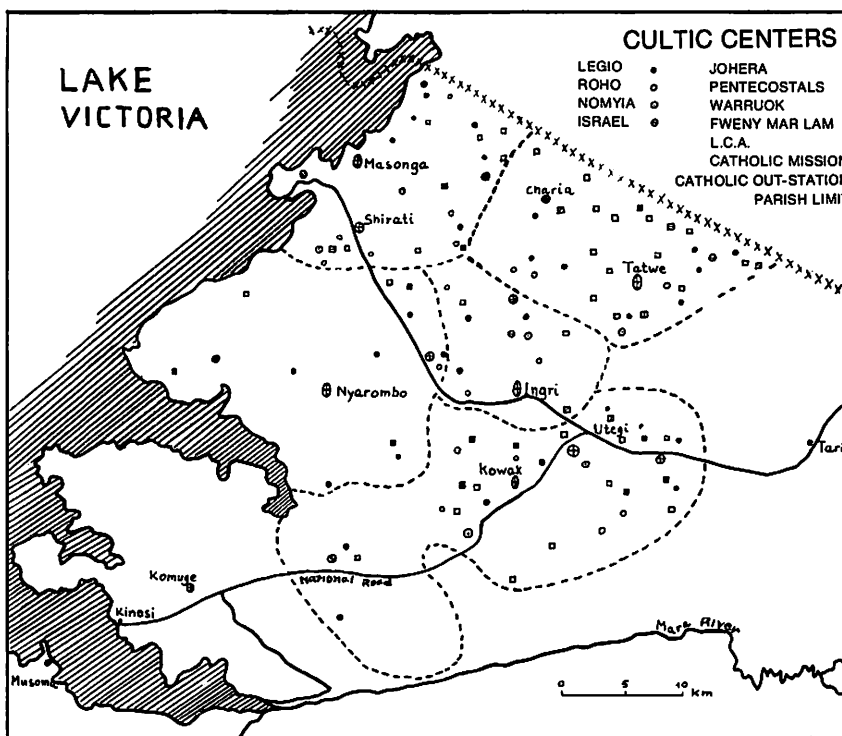
23. The first African church, founded officially in 1918, was given the name of "Mission of the Luo" (Nomyia Luo Mission) and was originally intended only for the Luo, the new chosen people (See Ch. 4). Now it asserts its universality.

24. Whisson, *Change and Challenge*, p. 12.

LAKE  
VICTORIA

# CULTIC CENTERS

- |        |   |                      |
|--------|---|----------------------|
| LEGIO  | • | JOHERA               |
| ROHO   | ◦ | PENTECOSTALS         |
| NOMYIA | ◦ | WARRUOK              |
| ISRAEL | ◉ | FWENY MAR LAM        |
|        |   | L.C.A.               |
|        |   | CATHOLIC MISSION     |
|        |   | CATHOLIC OUT-STATION |
|        |   | PARISH LIMIT         |



## CHAPTER TWO

# The Situation of the Luo in North Mara

### *The Sociological Framework*

The report just drawn up applies along general lines to the Luo of Tanzania as well as to those of Kenya. The situation of the former is different, however, and we ought to describe more exactly the context of this study: first, from the point of view of social, political, and economic organization; then from the point of view of the place and work of missionary churches in the region.

*Territory and Inhabitants.* The district of North Mara is located in northern Tanzania on the east bank of Lake Victoria, in a triangle bound on the northeast by the border between Kenya and Tanzania, on the west by Lake Victoria, and on the south by the Mara River. It has contrasting lowlands, with black and fertile soil but subjected to alternating floods and droughts, and wooded hills with sandy soil and a more temperate climate.

The total population of the district is about one hundred and fifty thousand, of which, according to the 1957 census, about eighty thousand are Luo. About 60 percent of the Bantu groups, absorbed by the Luo, are bilingual and preserve all their customs, in particular, the circumcision of boys and the excision of girls, neither of which is practiced among the Luo. These Bantu clans came from the north three or four hundred years earlier and themselves absorbed or drove off the first occupants.

In contact with the Luo and the bilingual Bantu are many other ethnic groups. Along the lake are established the BaSuba and the BaSimbiti, who say they are descendants of the BaSukuma,<sup>1</sup> who would have emigrated northward four

hundred years ago. They continue to bear Sukuma names. In the eastern part of the district and along the Mara River, live an important group, the BaKuria, close relatives of the Gusii of Kenya.

The district is well provided with roads, having a northeast to southwest highway which connects it with Kenya and the rest of Tanzania. Another route, easily passable by car, connects the administrative center of the district, Tarime, and the commercial center of Utegi with the important hospital at Shirati. Most of the little places in the interior are located along tracks which are passable during the dry season but present difficulties during the rains. Buses and minibuses assure travelers of transportation along the two principal routes.

The Luo arrived in the district at the end of the last century and their immigration still continues. At first, the search for new pastures drove them southward. Then, when an epidemic decimated their cattle and forced them to become sedentary, they established their farms on the land they had already conquered, that is, on the grassy plain situated between the lake, the hills to the north, and the Mara River to the south. During this second phase, the disposition of the Luo on the land was accomplished through clan groupings represented by a very small number of lineages, perhaps only one. The multiplication of families during the following half century extended the hold of the clans on the soil, radiating from the spatial poles occupied by the first arrivals. The abundance of land made it possible for lineages to move on when soil and pasturage gave out. But the strict regulations imposed by the British and the progressive limitation of space as the population increased little by little brought about overpopulation in regions taken over a long time ago. This is producing emigration towards the hills to the north, formerly underpopulated. Another movement of the same kind, originating in Kenya, is leading to the rapid occupation of the best of the highlands. The settling of the Luo in the hills has not followed the clan model, except in the regions occupied at the beginning of the

century near Kenya. The territories recently taken over or in process of being occupied are populated by families coming by themselves either from Kenya or from the lowlands of North Mara and belonging to very different clans. Few have occupied the land for more than a generation with the exception of the clan members who owned the land and are very widely dispersed. The occupation of the soil in North Mara differs from place to place, as other groups come to compete for pasturage, cultivatable soil, and water. Sometimes these are families who have emigrated. Sometimes it is a clan and its lineages who have been installed for generations in a space which has become insufficient but which cannot be extended into nearby land occupied by another clan and who, therefore, now live far from their kin in a region where they are strangers and alone.

*Neighborliness with Kenya.* Whatever their local situation, the Luo of North Mara are in constant communication with the Luo of Kenya. Clan and lineage bonds are not broken by distance and contacts are frequent. The Luo of North Mara never hesitate to make long journeys of four or five hundred miles to visit their families in Kenya, and the flow of travelers is heavy from one side of the border to the other, especially in the vicinity of the lake.

The continual returning to their sources expresses the dependence of the Luo of Tanzania on their people in Kenya. Visits of the latter to North Mara are far less frequent. In fact, the Luo of North Mara turn to Kenya in all sorts of circumstances. It is usual to see them undertake an expensive journey of several weeks to assist at the marriage or burial of a relative. They often take wives from Kenya, for it is advisable to live as far as possible from in-laws and, in addition to that, the law of exogamy often applies to two neighboring clans because of the bond of kinship existing between their founders.

New ideas also come most often from Kenya, where economic development and cultural evolution are much more advanced than in North Mara. There too competition for the land and for employment is much keener. Thus the majority



of African churches under study originated in Kenya and men instructed there introduced them into North Mara. Schools, too, are more numerous in Kenya, and many young people cross the border to pursue their studies. Lastly, when a Luo of Tanzania wants to find paid employment he generally goes to Kenya to find it, for there he has relatives, a family, who can offer him shelter, help, and guidance when he comes to town.

Visits of the Luo of Kenya to North Mara are much less frequent. Those who live near the border maintain close relations with their relatives living in Tanzania and willingly travel there for marriage and burials. But the majority of Luo, particularly those who live in the region of Kisumu or Alego, have little contact with North Mara. If they have relatives in the area it is they who do the traveling. It is the same with the African churches. If a visitor does arrive from Kenya, it is almost always an important man, a bishop, a pastor, an evangelist, who comes to teach or to distribute the sacraments to those who are isolated in Tanzania. This marks an exceptional occasion, celebrated with much feasting and marked by religious renewal. But much oftener do the faithful of North Mara take to the road to go to visit the numerous and better established communities of Kenya.

One aspect of the relations between Kenya and the district of North Mara which is particularly interesting is the movement of Luo emigration towards the still unoccupied or underoccupied lands of the south. These are uprooted families, cut off from their near relatives, isolated in an environment still but little domesticated, where wild animals are still numerous and cattle thefts frequent. Their relations with their neighbors are first filled with mistrust, for they have no blood ties nor are they bound together by a long habit of living together. To this situation of material and social insecurity is added a psychological factor, for the pioneer who leaves his lineage to set himself up alone is already different from the others because of his spirit of initiative and an individualism which is generally unacceptable in Luo society. Regions colonized in this recent fashion

are also the richest in African churches, which offer to their faithful new bedrock for solidarity.

*Interethnic Relations.* The relations of the Luo with the other ethnic groups of the district vary with each case. If peaceful coexistence is the rule, a whole gamut of relationships which go from declared hostility to fusion can be found. Thus the Luo do not approach the Masai unarmed, for the latter are notorious cattle thieves, although it is usually the BaKuria who bear the brunt of their expeditions into Tanzania. Relations with the BaKuria, almost as numerous as the Luo, are based on distrust. Their culture, their social organization, their language, their customs, all separate them from the Luo. Their agricultural traditions make them take better care of their fields, and they reap better harvests than the Luo, more recently settled on the land. The BaKuria are also more conservative, more attached to their customs. Their conversion to Christianity is slower but of greater depth. However, despite the distrust which usually exists between the Luo and the BaKuria, and the accusations of sorcery and black magic which neighbors are all too ready to hurl at one another, mixed marriages are sometimes contracted. It is true that in general, as far as the Luo are concerned, these take place with bilingual clans absorbed at the beginning of the century.

Relations of the Luo with the BaSuba are much closer, and mixed marriages more frequent, doubtless because of the isolation of the latter and the fewness of their number. It is probable that without the intervention of the colonial power which put an end to the Luo's advance, the BaSuba would have been absorbed like other neighboring Bantu. But today the development of communications facilitates their relations with other Suba clans settled farther south, and they have no need to learn Luo in order to break out of their isolation, since Swahili is the national language. The fusion of the two groups, apparently inevitable a hundred years ago, has today become improbable.

The Luo of Tanzania are an active minority who look to Kenya for their inspiration. They know, just the same, that

their material future is bound up with Tanzania's, and they compete energetically with other ethnic groups for the construction of schools and dispensaries and for administrative posts in the district.

*Political and Administrative Organization.* It would have been desirable to study in depth Tanzania's one political party, T.A.N.U.<sup>2</sup> and its influence on local life. Such research presented, however, major difficulties of the practical order, and it is necessary to be content with an outline of the political and administrative organization of the district.

In principle at least, it is very different from what the colonial power had set up. Theoretically, everybody belongs to one party headed by Julius Nyerere, president of Tanzania. When asked, most people gave this kind of an answer. Local sections of the party are principally in charge of projects of collective development, especially the upkeep of the roads.

From the point of view of the administration, the ancient chiefs of the district named by the British were deprived of their functions at the time of independence. They have, however, retained a certain prestige and moral authority, all the greater because they have lost the power to coerce. At the local level, the population is organized by responsible men elected at the rate of one family head for every ten farms. These delegates form the V.D.C., the Village Development Council, whose president is at the same time the head of the local section of the party. Each V.D.C. sends a delegate to the North Mara District Council which, on their presentation by the party chooses the *Manangwa*, the local functionaries responsible for development. The *Manangwa* are under the direction of the Divisional Secretary and form the link between the local sections of the party and the administration.

The local government includes three hierarchies, three circles, linked together by people who belong to two categories at the same time. There are first the councils elected by direct suffrage (the V.D.C.) and indirect (the

North Mara District Council), then the party organization whose local sections are associated with the V.D.C. through their presidents and united to the echelon of the division under the direction of six *Manangwa*, themselves under the authority of the Secretary of the Division, who belongs to the administrative hierarchy. The highest responsible administrator of the district is the Area Commissioner.<sup>3</sup>

Insofar as I can judge without making a real investigation of the subject, the local political life seems to amount to little and the political consciousness of the Luo remains undeveloped, outside of an enthusiastic attachment to the person of President Nyerere. Ideas of democracy and citizen responsibility for national development have scarcely begun to dawn in their minds.

*The School and Medical Situation.* The school and medical situation is tied up with cooperation between the missions and the government and competition between the missions themselves. Rivalry, however, tends to give place, more and more, to cooperation. The first schools and dispensaries were established in the immediate proximity of the missions, and this is still the case with the Catholic maternity hospital and school at Kowak, and the large Mennonite hospital and school at Shirati. But the lack of qualified personnel has prevented the multiplication of medical and school annexes at the same pace as parishes and missions. Thus the Catholic parish of Masonga includes a primary school but no dispensary. The parish of Ingri has a little school, and a dispensary where the Sister nurses of Kowak come periodically to care for the sick of the region, while an African medical assistant provides emergency care.

The government and the missions have responded to the lack of basic school and medical facilities by organizing bush schools and dispensaries, where a service of inferior quality is offered but the most urgent needs are met. The bush schools, provided either by the missions with the concurrence of the state, or directly by the latter, offer teaching up to the fourth year. The teachers' qualifications are poor and the children learn only reading, writing, the rudiments of arithmetic, and

a little Swahili, the national language. Government dispensaries are visited by African nurses, but often lack the most essential supplies. On their part, the missions exert themselves to multiply medical rounds in order to reach the sick who cannot always make a journey of twenty miles or more on foot to the nearest dispensary. Rivalry between missions in the medical sphere is giving way more and more to solicitude for a better distribution of services which will meet the needs of the people.

Instruction and hygiene, however, remain but little developed in spite of the efforts of the missions and the government to awaken the women's consciousness in this regard. Courses are organized in the missions or in the bush to teach them the rudiments of nutrition, baby care, personal cleanliness, and domestic hygiene. In regard to instruction, many family heads still refuse to send their children to school because school fees are high and the children's absence deprives the farm of appreciable work hands. On the other hand, the population is increasing, thanks to immunizations and to the maintenance of peace among the ethnic groups, while the lack of qualified personnel prevents the development of an educational and medical infrastructure at a rate sufficient to overcome the present deficiency or even to keep pace with the demographic increase.

*Daily Life.* After having described in broad lines the framework in which the daily life of the Luo of North Mara unfolds, it is appropriate now to tell in what their daily life consists. In everyday existence some essential themes stand out clearly—work, food, family, money, leisure, social relationships. Through these, values and problems become apparent. In the African churches we find them expressed under the form of prohibitions, rites, and collective practices, for if religious life is not identified with profane life in the African churches, it is closely associated with it.<sup>4</sup>

Men and women get up very early—at the first glimmer of dawn. Formerly they addressed a short prayer to the rising sun to express what they looked forward to from the day and from life. The morning greeting is *Oyaore*, which means "It is

open" to indicate that the appearance of the sun opens up a new period of activity. No cooking is done on the farm in the morning and breakfast consists in the cold left-overs of the evening before, if there are any, or in a paste of millet with water and a little milk called *nyuka*. This gruel is much appreciated by the Luo and considered a source of vital renewal. It is the nourishment of little children, of the sick, of women at childbirth, and at the time of a ceremony of reconciliation, the participants all drink *nyuka* from the same calabash as a sign that they have re-established harmonious relations.

Even before the sun has risen, men and women go to the fields to dig, hoe, weed, plant, or clear the land according to the season. A woman's quality as a farm worker is judged first of all by how free she keeps her fields of grass and weeds. Men take on the especially heavy work. Clearing the land is done by fire or by machete and in wooded places the felling of trees is made easier by cutting an incision in the base of the trunk to kill the tree. Tillage is done by the women with spades or by the men if they have a plow and team of oxen available. Tractors are rare. An experiment in the purchase and cooperative use of a tractor and a mechanical windmill has been attempted by a missionary who furnished half of the capital at the start, while the farming members of the cooperative furnished the other half.

Crops are planted in thirds: millet and other grains, maize, and cassava (*marieba*). Each farm also raises sweet potatoes, sometimes other vegetables (tomatoes and a sort of sorrel) and fruit (papaya, orange, lemon, bananas, and pineapples). Depending on the nature of the soil, rice, sugarcane, a little coffee, and Indian hemp are also grown. The latter is readily used by the old folks and sometimes, too, by the younger. The prohibition against smoking by most of the African churches first concerns this plant and is extended by analogy to tobacco, which is also cultivated in isolated projects and is the subject of a lively local trade. Plantings of sisal, made obligatory by the government around 1966, have been abandoned because of the collapse of the

market. But sisal is generally used as a live hedgerow around the farms, protecting them from wild animals and cattle thieves. At maturity, it can be cut and used for timber, especially in deforested areas.

Young children, if they are not going to school or if they are on vacation, have charge of the cattle. In the morning they take them from the *boma* and lead them out to graze. If there are no children at home, a man or a women takes charge, for there are no enclosed pastures and the herds have to be watched to keep them from going into the cultivated fields and to protect them from being stolen, as thieves are not rare near the border. In this task, several neighboring farms can act in concert, even when their families are not kin, taking turns guarding their combined herds. This is often done in zones recently occupied.

Until three o'clock in the afternoon it is rare to find at the homestead adults of an age to work or children capable of guarding the herds. Old folks guard the house with little girls who take care of the very small children. About three o'clock, the grown-ups return from the fields and the women begin to get the evening meal ready. They often bring back wood for the fire when returning from the fields. They still have to go for water, sometimes as far as a mile away. During this time, the men rest, gossip, and visit neighboring farms unless small maintenance jobs and tool repair keep them at their own door. The evening meal, the only real meal of the day, includes an enormous quantity of *kuon* prepared from grain flour in the period following the harvest or with manioc flour when the rich cereals have been exhausted. The women often mix cereal and manioc flour in order to balance the diet and make their provisions last. Sweet potatoes can replace the *kuon* but are much less appreciated and reserved for periods between harvests. The *kuon* is always served with a sauce made of green vegetables, sometimes mixed with sour cream, or with a sauce containing some boiled meat or fish.

There are butchers in all the little shopping clusters around the missions and marketplaces. They sell beef meat but without carving it into special cuts. Goat meat and

mutton are provided by farm animals killed for some important family occasion or on the visit of some notable guest. Chicken, however, is the classic menu for a visitor, to whom the best portions are offered while the family regale themselves on the carcass and feet and whatever their guest wishes to leave.

Among the Luo, food is the principal means of entertaining and the appetite of the guests indicates the part they are taking in the event being celebrated by the repast and the friendship which they entertain towards the master of the house. Food is also the principal preoccupation of the women. All of their activities from dawn until dark concern the production and preparation of nourishment: cultivating the land, gathering the harvest, grinding, collecting wood and getting water, cooking, preparing sauces. It should be remarked that many families whose contacts with Western civilization have been most frequent, through missions and schools and life in the city, now have a midday as well as an evening meal.

If a market is held in the neighborhood, at least within ten miles, women go there in the morning carrying the product of their fields or their handwork. Some sell fruit, vegetables, cereal mixed with manioc flour, fresh or dried fish. Others sell fired earthenware and pots for carrying and keeping water, woven baskets which must be coated with cowdung by the buyers to make them fit for holding grain or flour, cords of sisal prepared at the farm. The men go to the market, too, to sell poultry, goats, and sheep. They transport grain on the back of a donkey, and products of their handiwork (chests, stools) or they set up stalls with articles for daily use: soap, matches, sugar loaves, salt, white enamelware kettles and basins, clothing, blankets. The marketplace itself is an area with a hard earthen floor and some shade, often surrounded by an enclosure or a living hedge. All is color and animation, the more so because the market has given birth to a permanent trade center. Tailors, installed under the roof of the shops with their pedal sewing machines and surrounded with clothing and hanging cloth,



make a gaudy spot. Shops sell soft drinks and young men find the market a place to meet their friends, show off their clothes, and court young girls. One of the markets which I visited even included an enclosure where they could do Western dancing. It is noticeable that the flow of buyers and sellers precedes the arrival of idlers, who come only in the beginning of the afternoon when the marketplace itself is empty. The market, weekly or biweekly depending on the locality, is a social event as well as an economic necessity.

During periods when work on the land requires less exertion, men cut wood, repair their houses, or build new dwellings and storehouses woven like baskets. They give and receive neighborly help in tasks which require collective effort. This is the time when the African churches choose to construct or repair their places of worship and the local section of T.A.N.U. organizes its road-repair teams. Craftsmen too profit by this period to augment their production. Inactive men frequent the local court of justice as spectators or witnesses if they themselves do not have some interminable process underway.

There are a small number of activities which can be followed throughout the year. Tailors never want for work. Making dresses, shirts, trousers, and especially school uniforms, obligatory in Tanzania, is essentially a masculine activity, for women are ignorant of sewing and are very unskillful with their hands. Carpenters, settled in wooded areas, also have a good trade, making rude beds, tables, chairs, chests for clothing, things always in demand. For new activities due to the influence of Western civilization, the trend is towards specialization. Techniques are not widespread among the population but remain the endowment of a few and are passed on through apprenticeship. To roof a house with sheet metal, to build a house of concrete, to repair a bicycle, to make a garment, do a little carpentry, all require a specialist.

From three to seven in the evening, men and women are occupied with their different jobs. When night falls, with a very short twilight in a region situated so close to the

equator, the cattle are put into the *boma*. The evening meal is taken separately by the men while the women and children eat near the kitchen fire, located outside or in a special hut, which also serves to shelter small livestock at night. Then the children bed down. The young people often go to dance at a nearby farm where there is a guitarist or take turns inviting one another with their musicians. "Guitar evenings" are considered by the missionaries and the government as occasions for the corruption and debauchery of the young, but in spite of prohibitions they continue to have a lively success. Parents spend the evening around the fire, for the nights are cool at that altitude. They are sometimes invited to a neighboring farm to drink millet beer or freshly distilled alcohol. Those who indulge in this activity are generally women of mature years, whose children are married and who are assisted on the farm by the young wives of their husband or of their sons. They have, in fact, fewer mouths to feed and so use up farm products sufficient for the distillation of a large quantity of alcohol, five gallons or more. But the defective methods they employ make their product disagreeable to taste and dangerous to drink. The missions and the government both try to forbid private distillation but alcoholism is nevertheless rather widespread among the population. During the days when distillation at the farm is going on, neighbors are invited to stop by in the evening and taste the product, and they get drunk, sing, gossip, and dance, sometimes until late at night. On the way home the men escort the women, being armed with spears and machetes for protection against thieves, wild animals, and the local bogeyman, the *jajouk*.

So this is the way that Luo life flows along in North Mara in an environment in which tradition and modern life are mixed, depending on the area, the wealth of the family head, and his cultural level. In spite of an impression of routine and stability, evolution is rapid. An atmosphere of disquiet, distress, and dissatisfaction prevails. Existence is no longer as simple as it used to be and needs increase faster than the means to satisfy them. To find money has become the

obsession of the young and the not so young as well, but the mechanisms which govern its distribution are beyond the understanding of the majority. They often turn to a magician to learn about the future which so distresses them and to obtain charms to assure them of success in examinations, a salaried job, and luck in all their undertakings.

No grave problem weighs on North Mara. Overpopulation exists only in certain areas, drought is never total, all have enough to eat, inequalities are not flagrant, the different ethnic groups are at peace, political and administrative pressures are diminished by distance from the centers where decisions are made. Yet each one experiences individually the precariousness of his situation, the slow and inexorable collapse of the old social structures, which leaves a moral and cultural void, an insecurity for which nothing can compensate. The keynote of the general mood is a feeling of inferiority and powerlessness in the face of the techniques and objectives of modern civilization which, nevertheless, alone seem desirable.

### *The Missionary Churches in North Mara*

It is at the same time the great strength and the great weakness of the traditional beliefs and practices that they are not embodied in institutions: weakness, because faced with complex and consolidated organizations, they are rendered inactive; strength, because they cannot be destroyed simply by abolishing a structure but are deeply impressed on minds. The missionary churches, on the contrary, seem to be organisms whose temporal power and external hold on the life of the Luo are considerable but often remain foreign to their thought. However, they furnish the African churches with a doctrinal base, with models of organization and rituals, and with a good part of their faithful. It is therefore indispensable to study the way a mission appears to the faithful and the image they form of it.

*The Catholic Church.* One of the characteristic traits of the situation in North Mara is the importance of the

Catholic Church. Nearly half of the Luo have been baptized in one or other of the five parishes of the district and this in the space of thirty years. The Catholic Church is a powerful organization in Tanzania. The White Fathers, the first to arrive, divided their parishes with the American Maryknoll Fathers in 1946 in order to assure better religious coverage of the country, still but little evangelized. Catholicism made considerable progress in twenty years, to the point of becoming one of the moving forces for economic and social development. Since independence, the Church has continued to play this role, but the influence of the Moslems on the coast and of the Adventists, who are numerous in government, endanger the preponderance of the Catholics, scattered as they are throughout the rest of the country.

In the district of North Mara, however, they are by far the most numerous. Catholic Luo are grouped in five parishes.

*Kowak*, founded in 1933 by the White Fathers, taken over in 1946 by the Maryknoll Fathers. In a population of about 24,000 the parish register shows 11,000 baptized. If to this is added the faithful of other confessions, the proportion of Christians in the whole population exceeds three-fourths.

*Masonga*, first parish founded by Maryknoll, in 1948. Catholics number 6,500 in a population of 15,000. Counting the faithful of other confessions, particularly the numerous Mennonites at Shirati, the proportion of Christians would be almost four-fifths.

*Nyarombo*, founded in 1956, is a parish where Luo, bilingual groups, and BaSuba coexist. Catholics make up but one-fifth of the population, numbering 5,800 in a total of 25,000. Despite the presence of Mennonites and Adventists, Christians are not a majority.<sup>5</sup>

*Tatwe*, founded in 1959, situated like Masonga on the border between Kenya and Tanzania. It is a mountainous area, recently settled, where the clans are very mixed. The total population comes to 16,000, of which about one-third are Catholics. There is no estimate of the number of Protestants.

*Ingri*, the youngest parish of North Mara, was founded in 1962 near the road connecting Utegi and Shirati. Luo are in the majority but other ethnic groups are represented, KaKuria and bilingual groups. Among 10,000 inhabitants, more than 3,000 baptisms have been registered.<sup>6</sup>

To a certain extent, local conditions of life set the direction that missionary work will take. Those who live in a parish are scattered over a wide area. It can be more than twenty-five miles from the center of the parish to its periphery. Groups are not concentrated in one place. The only concentrations, which have little importance, are the shops built around the marketplaces or the mission itself with its school, teachers' homes, dispensary, widows' quarters, and a few shops. The interior of the territory is scored with tracks and paths unsuitable for four-wheel motor traffic, except for all-terrain vehicles, and passable by bicycles and motorcycles. The Luo travel on foot, ready to hitchhike if the few trucks or cars which take to the road are willing to stop for them. If they are well-to-do, they travel by bicycle. It is a source of popularity for missionaries to drive the sick to the hospital and to pick up mail at the Tarime post office.

Given the mode of Luo life, missionaries must be on the go constantly to visit their faithful, since it is they who have the means of transportation necessary to cover the long distances between the parish center and the farms. However, the image of the Church, which makes poverty a virtue, suffers from this in an environment in which possessing some means of transportation is a sign of wealth and power.

The same observation can be applied to buildings. Each mission includes quite a few, of concrete, with a roof of sheet metal or tile: a house of several rooms for the priests, a convent, a kitchen and a storehouse, a church, a shelter for teaching the catechumens, sometimes a dispensary or hospital buildings, classrooms, houses for the teachers, the catechists, the catechumens, the widows, etc. The whole is spread over a wide area with plantings of trees and flowers and walks marked by rows of whitewashed stones. The church is usually rather spacious, recently built in Western style with a sheet-metal roof and stained glass windows. The altar is

placed on a dais, the choir contains a raised pulpit for the reading of the Scriptures and the sermon. Decoration is reduced to a minimum, with only a large crucifix, the way of the cross, and sometimes a statue of the Virgin. Most parish churches, but not the out-stations, contain wooden benches. The out-stations resemble the parish churches insofar as they are not constructed in the local style and with local materials, that is, with dried mud brick and thatch. Mass is said there at least once a month, sometimes every Sunday.

The advantage of constructions of a modern type is obvious from a practical point of view and they do make available architectural models capable of guiding development in this sphere. But, as a matter of fact, given the price of construction materials, it is not possible for the Luo to take inspiration from them, however much they might want a European house. Furthermore, since the church itself, the place where God is present, is built according to foreign techniques and with foreign materials, religious practices are closely associated with Western civilization. Besides, the participation of local Christians in constructing their church remains very limited or even nonexistent, for technical and financial reasons, and, when it has cost them nothing, their attachment to it is proportionately weak. Finally, a European house constitutes a luxury in the eyes of the people, whatever its simplicity and lack of comfort by Western and particularly American standards. It reinforces in the people's minds the idea that the principal trait of the Church is wealth.

Add to that the fact that the missionaries cannot receive into their houses by day and night all the visitors who present themselves and that they cannot distribute the rainwater caught for the use of the missions to all who ask for it—both perfectly justified by reason but contrary to the local customs of hospitality—and it will be understandable that the image of the Church is impaired in the minds of the faithful. To them the attitude of the missionaries seems to contradict their vow of poverty and their doctrine of Christian charity, however unjust the judgment may be. Lastly, it must be remarked that for the faithful, what is tolerable and

comprehensible on the part of Western priests, is much less so on the part of African priests, although they have adopted this style of life during the course of their studies. To replace missionary clergy with African clergy risks not solving but aggravating the problem. We have here an internal contradiction, a conflict between the objectives and the visible aspect of the Church which generates tension and plays an important part in the phenomenal multiplication of the African churches.

At the actual level of Christianization, the priest holds first place both as to responsibility and action in parochial life. His religious activities have many aspects, the most important being the distribution of the sacraments, since he is the only one qualified to fill that office.

Baptism is the sacrament most in demand by the Luo, for young children but especially for adults and the dying. Adult catechumens receive group instruction for six months or a year depending on the parish and the frequency of instruction sessions. They then receive baptism all together, after having given proof of a minimum of knowledge.

Confession poses a problem, for the faithful do not want to make the long journey on foot from their homes to the mission twice a week and, on the other hand, it is difficult to confess everybody before Sunday Mass. Any question of attachment to the faith aside, the way the sacrament is offered does not always correspond to the needs and possibilities of the faithful.

Matrimony is still less in demand than penance for practical reasons—such as the difficulty of transporting the wedding party a distance to the parish center—as well as for social and moral reasons. The ceremony at the church does not correspond with the spaced-out stages of the customary marriage. In addition, a man does not usually want to contract a religious marriage until he knows that his wife can give him a first child, for if she is sterile he will send her back home and take another. And very often, when the union is considered permanent, the habit of living outside the Church has taken hold and the marriage is never regularized.<sup>7</sup>

The anointing of the sick is a sacrament much in demand, not only for the dying but also for the seriously ill. The family of the sick person come to ask the priest when he visits neighboring farms or when he celebrates Mass at an out-station, but often he is called directly to the bedside of the sick at any hour of the day or night. In that case, neighbors are already gathered at the farm and join the priest in saying the prayers for the dying.

As for communion, distributed to the faithful during Mass, there are always many who receive. Mass is said every day at the parish church before a congregation usually limited to some old women and one or two catechists who live nearby. Once a week Mass may be said for the school children if the parish has a school. In addition, the priest goes from time to time to celebrate Mass in areas where the Christians are numerous and far away from a center of worship. The ceremony takes place in the open or in any adequate and available structure.

Evangelization represents an important part of missionary activity. The catechists recruit catechumens, teach them the prayers, and get them to repeat the lessons given by the priest. But the latter must first write an adapted catechism in the local language; check whether or not the catechumens are in a moral situation to receive baptism; teach Christian doctrine and sacred history; supervise the work of the catechists and regularly give courses to refresh their knowledge and to form new candidates; see that catechumens pass examinations which give evidence of progress and that children of school age do the same in preparation for their first communion and confirmation. The religious education of children presents grave problems, for eighty percent of them leave school after four years of study, and the deepening of their knowledge thereafter depends on what they hear at Sunday Mass. Furthermore, since the teaching is in Swahili and priests in the Luo milieu speak it but little, it is difficult for them to appraise the religion courses given by the teachers, particularly in the state schools.

Visiting families constitutes the third chosen missionary activity properly so-called. It is a valuable source of contacts



between priest and parishioners, for he thus perfects his knowledge of the language and of the concrete problems faced by the faithful. On their side, the Christians are happy and proud to receive a visit from their pastor and those who are sliding into indifference are inclined to change their attitude when they feel themselves the object of personal interest.

The different activities, which are part of the specifically religious mission of the priest, demand much travel and much time to produce any appreciable result. However, priests also have to assume other tasks, such as construction and administration. They often have the responsibility of getting the buildings needed for their parish built, that is, of drawing up plans and directing the work of special workers or of accomplishing the little jobs which one man can do by himself. Keeping the parish register, the account books, are also incumbent upon the priest, who has not the means to pay an employee sufficiently educated to take his place. This task is complicated by the difficulty he has in obtaining exact information about the Catholic population when often births, marriages, and deaths are brought to his attention only months or even years afterward. Priests make themselves responsible for the management of schools in the bush, financially difficult to support. But the missionaries consider that contact with Christian charity in action through medical and school activities makes the Church accepted and loved by all, even non-Catholics.

At the present time, priests devote a great part of their time and resources to activities of economic and social development. A cooperative founded for the purchase and use of a tractor at Masonga, raising chickens at Kowak, efforts to encourage the cultivation of new crops for commercialization or local consumption by the distribution of seeds, and instruction in agriculture for adults, are all either under way or under study. The housewifely formation of women is a slow task, and the professional formation of the young on the local level has not met with much success so far.

The participation of lay people in parochial life is rather limited. The only lay religious organization is the Legion of Mary. To adapt it to a rural and illiterate milieu presents a number of problems as the movement was born in an urban milieu where the participants had a minimum of education, and its European leaders are very strict as to the observance of procedures and practices. It has, nevertheless, achieved a certain success in the immediate surroundings of the missions. It is oriented towards the recruiting of catechumens; recalling to their duties Christians who have not regularized their marriages or who have neglected the sacraments; encouraging children who have been baptized to study for their first communion. Difficulties remain great, just the same, for the Legion Handbook has not been translated into Luo and the Swahili version has many defects. Reports of the sessions are irregularly and poorly kept for lack of a capable secretary. The rule requiring that the meetings be held on a day other than Sunday makes it difficult for everybody to attend each session. Finally, the little time and interest given by the priests to this movement in Kenya is one of the factors which led to the formation of the African church which goes by the name of Legio Maria. So the Catholic Legion of Mary seems to function effectively only within precise geographical limits and by deviating from the rules imposed by its founders. Another type of movement, better adapted to the milieu, would doubtless obtain better results.

Among the many problems which the missionaries face in accomplishing their task, I shall bring up two which will throw light on the attitude of the faithful towards the Catholic Church.

The first is the contribution of parishioners to the expenses of the Church. Given the insufficient funds allocated by the diocese, missionaries must resort to participation by the faithful. Now it is very difficult to bring them to contribute in proportion to the needs, and the means of constraining them to do so have given way to numerous discussions, especially in regard to the right of priests to refuse the sacraments to those who do not fulfill this

obligation. Refusing to confess those who could not present evidence that they had paid the full amount required, either in cash or in work, or to baptize the children of those not in order for the year, are practices abandoned today. The only vestige left is the requirement that baptismal sponsors be chosen from among those who have paid their annual church tax.

Certainly farmers, who live on what they produce and for whom cash is a rare commodity, are loath to separate themselves from the few shillings needed for the parish. But, above all, to them the missionaries seem so rich in European goods and in cash that people should be able to look to them to give rather than to be asking the poor to increase their abundance. Because of this viewpoint, it is surprising that the missions obtain even slender contributions for parish expenses, the nature and necessity of which are not always plain to the faithful.<sup>8</sup>

The offerings required on the occasion of baptisms and marriages are given more willingly than the *zaka*, the annual church tax, for they are reminiscent of the offerings required by diviners and magicians for the exercise of their art and are related to an immediate service. However, the African churches, while adopting comparable practices, do not refrain from accusing the missionaries of selling the free gift of God, and they make this one of their principal arguments in criticizing foreign churches. So the financial problem is a lasting subject of tension between the missions and the faithful and the origin of a climate of distrust and discontent which favors the emergence of dissident movements.

A second problem is the contrast between the fervor of the neophytes and the indifference into which a number of Christians fall after baptism. In fact, the pressure of environment and the small scope left in daily life for individual initiative, can lead the best Catholic to stray from the laws of the Church and become excluded from the sacraments. This happened in the case of one of the faithful at Kowak. A pious and wealthy man, whose wife was sterile, he resisted for ten years the constant requests of his family to

take a second wife, seeking in prayer the strength to persevere in his attitude. But after ten years he finally gave in to the point of view of those around him and remarried. The pressure of environment is all the stronger because Christians are widely scattered and cannot form themselves into little communities capable of maintaining a strong hold on their own system of values. Then too distance from the parish center tends to detach the faithful from the collective practice of their religion. However, individual fervor often survives separation from the sacraments; Luo continue to say their morning and night prayers, to recite the rosary, and to say grace before meals even if they have not gone to church for years.

All comes about as if tradition prevails over the new law simply by the weight of tradition. Then too the Luo find it more difficult to conform to church laws which seem to them less understandable. Polygamy, for example, is justified by the Bible but is nevertheless condemned by the priests who take their stand on the same Bible. On the other hand, the priests try to get husband and wife to sit together in church, or advise Christians to eat together as a family although custom forbids a father to eat with his daughter or a son to eat with his mother—two things which shock a Luo. In the face of what seems to them as arbitrary distinction between “good” and “bad,” the faithful often try to haggle with the priest to regularize their situation, as if the law could be turned to their profit by a contrary and equally arbitrary decision.

The Catholic Church, in spite of its difficulties, finds itself in a privileged position in the district as to the number of its adherents and its influence on local life. It subsidizes a good half of the schools open to Luo and non-Luo alike, particularly the extended primary. Catechumens are numerous. Churches are full on Sundays. It energizes economic and social development, acting as a source of models for objectives and methods. By its activity, Christianity is spread throughout the whole milieu. Nonetheless, it is separated from the Luo by a gap which the years have not closed: it

remains a foreign church attempting to impose a foreign law. In most cases, the faithful play an essentially passive role. Under these conditions it can be asked if a forced withdrawal of Western missionaries might not result in the disappearance of the Christian faith, although it has been present for nearly forty years, simply because the faithful, for different reasons, have never had to take a hand in the fortunes of their church and assume their responsibilities.

*The Anglican Church.* The Anglican Church is the only missionary organization in Nyanza comparable to the Roman Catholic Church. Its two poles are Kisumu, the diocesan center, and Maseno, the oldest missionary center in Luo country, which comprises a school and hospital, both well known. The diocese is divided into rural deaneries; they in turn are subdivided into pastorates the size of Catholic parishes. All the pastors are African, some are natives of their parishes. On the whole, they have received eight years of education, with a theological formation. They are often trilingual, speaking English, Swahili, and Luo, but insufficient intellectual formation and financial resources do not permit them to keep abreast of the evolution of ideas in their church and in the world. They are, therefore, tempted to follow the traditions established by their predecessors without making any attempt to introduce innovations or to adapt to new trends.

The Anglican Church has not sought to develop its activity in the district and continues to focus its efforts on Kenya, the source of inspiration for the faithful living in Tanzania.

The Anglican pastor goes by bicycle to visit some twenty chapels and forty bush schools in his charge. This means that he brings the sacraments to his parishioners about once every six weeks. During his visit he baptizes a few people and holds a service. The culminating point of the ceremony is the sermon; those who do not communicate then leave the church and wait outside for the end of the service, which can be followed by a meeting of the members of the Revival movement, during which the principal points of the sermon

are repeated. Testimonies of conversion and repentance are heard, and the pastor can take another turn at speaking in order to exhort his assistants. The whole lasts three or four hours and the pastor can celebrate only one such service a day.

When the pastor is absent, as is frequently the case, the Sunday service is assured by a layman, often a teacher in the bush school, sometimes a tradesman or a simple peasant who knows how to read. These receive their religious instruction in Bible schools but it is hardly above their congregation's—who often complain of the insufficiency of their teaching. However, the life of the Anglican Church rests essentially on men who derive little money or social satisfaction from it. In spite of their devotion, the faithful heed and respect them less than the leaders of the Revival movement who carry out their functions in a less routine fashion.

The service conducted by some responsible local person is carried out in the same way as that conducted by the pastor except for the communion. The faithful arrive one after another until the sermon when almost all the congregation are present. The meeting of the Revival movement seems to be the most important religious activity. Giving witness is the usual form of expression. The first to speak is usually a man, followed by a dozen other speakers. The last, who have not prepared their discourses, allude to the happenings of the week. The themes of the sermon are returned to time and time again, for the Luo express agreement by repeating statements they approve. Some testimonies correspond with a real transformation on the part of those who say they have been liberated from sin by their conversion. Often, however, witnesses and those who make public confessions begin by showing how good they have become since they were saved, and how little responsible they were for their former sins. When the congregation is touched by emotion, they intone the canticle of the Revival movement as a sign of approbation.

The strength of the Revival movement, although it

indicates an effort for deeper Christianization, has endangered the unity of the Anglican Church. The leaders of the Revival can refuse the financial cooperation of the movement to the pastor if he does not take part in it. The spiritual powers conferred directly by the Holy Spirit seem more important, moreover, than the teaching or liturgy directed by the pastor. Then too, the members of the local group of the movement consider themselves an elite and their activity is considerable, for reasons of prestige as well as for social and religious reasons. Belonging to the group creates close bonds among the members, who do much to help one another, especially in the case of the women. The clergy, insufficiently instructed, seem superfluous to them, all the more so as the sacraments hold but a weak position in the life of the community.

*Other Protestant Missions.* The Mennonites do not have as large a sphere of influence as the two churches first mentioned. Their activity is more localized and their missions in East Africa are few. They are found, however, in North Mara at Shirati, a rather large Mennonite center, where there are gathered fifteen Americans and Europeans, with two or three families present at times. It is not a religious mission properly so-called, but a hospital, and evangelization accompanies rather than precedes medical work.

The hospital is modern, composed of several buildings, and has about two hundred beds. It is directed by two or three doctors, depending on the year, and ten nurses who take care of the different hospital services and the formation and incorporation of African personnel. The hospital is equipped with an operating block, X-ray equipment, and in general the plant is modern, although adapted to local conditions. Electric current is furnished by a generator which supplies the medical installations, the living quarters of the missionaries, and the pump which brings water from the lake. The hospital includes a large leprosarium where a number of cases have been treated with success, care being followed by a period of re-education for those seriously affected.

The Mennonite parish is also very active. The church is

built on the hospital grounds but the pastor is African and his income, equivalent to a primary-school teacher's, comes just from the offerings of the faithful. He makes his rounds on a motorcycle and lives in a European type of house of rudimentary comfort but quite superior to the classic Luo house. The parochial community is much smaller than the Catholic communities nearby and very devoted to its practices and its church. A primary school is attached to the parish and offers seven years of teaching to boys and girls. On the whole, the missionaries who work in the hospital have little to do with the life of the parish outside of assisting at Sunday functions. The service is in Swahili with Mennonite hymns translated from English and sung to their original melodies. The sermon and readings from Scripture alternate with hymns and prayers recited with closed eyes. This attitude of prayer characterizes many African churches contrary to the most important missionary churches, the Catholic and Anglican, in which the faithful pray with their eyes open. It is only through their contacts with the African pastor that the American Mennonites of Shirati exercise an influence on the religious life of the locality.

Within the hospital organization efforts are made to allow the sick at the end of their convalescence and the people of the neighborhood to realize some additional income by developing crafts and agriculture. There is a club for women workers who meet twice a week to make, under the direction of the women of the missions, articles of woven straw which sell very well to Europeans passing through. Kitchen gardens have been developed by the lepers under the direction of a nurse responsible for this service to improve the nutrition and resources of the sick. These undertakings have had good results but have still reached only a small number of people. Given the high specialization of the missionaries' work and the big difference between the level of their life and that of the local population, their example cannot serve as a model for development, except for African families already quite Westernized.



The other Mennonite communities scattered throughout North Mara have no foreign missionaries, not even a pastor, but only a responsible layman entrusted with providing a Sunday service in the little chapel built by the faithful. These groups are rather closed, like the Adventist communities of the region. Both are noted for the reserve of their members and their sense of seemliness in clothing and social ways. They are communities of the faithful who have some education, at least some years of primary school, and you do not find among them illiterate peasants covered with rags, as you do in the Catholic Church. The places of worship also reveal the easy circumstances of the faithful and their desire of give a progressive character to their church. The chapels are built of local materials but by specialists and the whole seems more finished and permanent than the buildings constructed by the faithful of the African churches or the out-stations of the Catholic Church. In the Mennonite and Adventist communities there exists a different spirit than in the other churches. A sense of responsibility, more developed than elsewhere, is combined with the feeling of belonging to a relatively exclusive elite.

*Conclusions Concerning the Missionary Churches.* The problems met by the missionary churches in North Mara reveal what the Luo think of the Christian religion and explain the reaction of the African churches against a certain form of Christianity. To the Luo, Christianity seems to be a religion of an elite, not a moral or mystical elite, but one that is social, economic, and intellectual. The model for the Christian is the missionary, who is found at the summit of the scale in all three spheres. In the very mind of the missionary churches themselves, moreover, this conception is present and their entire work for education and development expresses it.

Christianity also seems a religion foreign to the culture and the local people. The missionary is white, and his idea of society and of law—which he attempts to impose—are often opposed to those of the people whom he is evangelizing. For him, Christianity requires the abandonment of traditional

customs and the adoption of a Western system of life and thought. A true Luo, integrated in his original milieu, cannot be a Christian according to the criteria of the missionary churches.

The Christian model is therefore imposed on the exterior of society and seems essentially formalism in Luo eyes: formalism of law, which rejects the local customs in favor of modern Western customs—clothing, monogamous marriage, ways of grouping; formalism of worship, which maintains the rites, chants, symbolism, and sometimes even the language of the West without taking into consideration how these are understood and felt by the Luo, born and brought up in an entirely different milieu. The Luo respect and venerate these forms and law, but they remain foreign practices: the Luo adore the God of the whites in a white man's building according to a white man's rites in order to form themselves into a white society. They themselves are on familiar terms only with the demons, that is, with the spirits that torment men but are not recognized by the missionary churches. Even this intimacy with the powers of darkness strengthens the feeling that, like the messengers from overseas, God is a stranger. It ought not to be astonishing, then, that the Luo go in quest of a God closer to them, directly accessible to an upsurge of ardent faith, a God who loves the African in his poverty and gives him the means to be delivered from the evils which weigh him down. The African churches constitute an attempt to establish a direct link with God, to discover a way of salvation for the humble and the fullness of revelation for the simple.

### *Conclusions Concerning the Evolving Luo Society*

The objective of the two chapters which give a brief description of Luo society and its evolution is not to present an exhaustive picture of that society itself but rather to make it evident that a crisis situation exists.

Like all people touched by colonization, the Luo have been upset by contact with Western civilization. In the

traditional society, men lived in a closed universe which bore within itself the seeds of its development. Social mechanisms were based on interpersonal relationships, and each person had a role to play. Particular talents managed to find expression in socially approved forms. To begin with, everybody had the same understanding of the objectives of existence and an equal chance to reach the highest status. Social success was at the same time political and economic, and success itself was an assurance that supernatural forces favored the enterprises of those who succeeded.

With the evolution of society under the influence of colonization and independence, the relative harmony between objectives and the mechanisms providing access to power, wealth, and prestige was disrupted. The establishment of new and larger political structures brought about the dissociation between the ideas of power and responsibility. Economic development compromised the unity of the lineage and the authority of the head of the family. Education opened up a cultural gap between the young and the grown-ups and formed an elite distinct from the rest of the population. Post-independence efforts to meld the different ethnic groups into a national whole have aggravated the disorganization of society. These different factors, among others, have had serious consequences on social cohesion and mobility.

The break-up of traditional balances and solidarities which gave strength to small autonomous groups has brought about a disintegration which has not been immediately compensated for by the establishment of functional fellowships of a Western kind. The result is an atomization of the social body and the genesis of a feeling of insecurity which increases in proportion to the spread of the process.

On the other hand, at the time when the expansion, pluralization, and secularization of society would have allowed greater social mobility, a whole section of the population found themselves actually cut off from any chance of achieving any higher status. In fact, the education or professional formation necessary to occupy any position

in the new society was reserved to a small number and, before long, to a relatively closed elite. Most important, the mechanisms of promotion in all spheres of life were Westernized, made complicated, and quickly became incomprehensible to the great mass without education. As a result, these found themselves separated from the elite by a chasm all the more impassable as it was cultural as well as political and economic. The resultant frustration was deeply felt.

In breaking the cyclic rhythm of society, the missionary churches have supplied the necessary elements for the formation of a new vision of the world, founded on the principle of linear evolution. Through the instrumentality of education and evangelization, they have introduced into society an ideology which elucidates and justifies development in all its aspects—spiritual, economic, social, and cultural. Progress and salvation are two forms of the notion of perfection: materials, seeking mastery over the forces of nature, an abundance of products and goods, and the establishment of a just and harmonious society; the spiritual (which does not exclude the former), seeking a salvation culminating in the Parousia.

This conception of the world should have served as the basis for a reorganization of society. It seems apparent that the missionary churches have failed on this point. Western religion has not known how to become incarnated in the local culture. It has remained foreign, parallel to society. In particular, it presents itself under an essentially individualistic form, while the traditional religion was essentially social. It did not respond to problems as the people experienced them: a feeling of insecurity due to the rupture of traditional solidarities; the progressive and disconcerting isolation of individuals in a complex society; the frustration felt by the masses made marginal to an economic progress which they are unable to understand and can profit by but little; impotence in the face of a destiny which eludes them on every level.

In addition to reacting in a political and economic way to this situation, the Luo have responded on the religious plane

by forming African churches which supply concrete and immediate solutions to their individual and collective problems. The nature, meaning, and limitations of these churches will be studied in the following chapters.

## Notes

1. People living southeast of Lake Victoria in Central Tanzania.
2. "Tanzanian African National Union."
3. From the point of view of rank, this post corresponds to the former District Commissioner of the British administration.
4. The description of daily life applies only to the district of North Mara, as there are numerous differences between Kenya and Tanzania in regard to economic and social matters.
5. In North Mara, Moslems are very few—and isolated.
6. The figures given come in part from the *Catholic Directory of Eastern Africa* and in part from the estimates made by the priests of each parish in answer to a questionnaire asking for general information.
7. Only thirty to forty marriages have been celebrated annually in the parish of Nyarombo, where the Catholic population increases by about five hundred souls each year. The attitude of the Luo regarding Christian marriage is illustrated by a little anecdote. A man and a woman, both Catholics, came to have their marriage regularized, concluded according to custom. At the traditional question, "Do you take this woman for your lawful wife. . ." the man burst out laughing and the congregation with him, "Why," he said "do you ask me if I want to take this woman for my wife when I have lived with her for thirty years?" To the Luo Christian marriage seems like the consecration, not the beginning of the union. (My examples when making comparisons between the Catholic Church and the African churches are all drawn from the parish of Nyarombo, which I have studied in depth.)
8. For the criticisms of the African churches on this point see Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Formation of African Churches

In spite of the vigorous growth of the missionary churches, reactions to them occurred from the time colonization and evangelization began. The development of independent religious movements among the Luo has progressed in a way which confirms the conclusions reached by David Barrett about the factors playing a part in the rise of African churches. In the measure in which certain basic conditions are fulfilled, the movements appear, multiply, and undergo transformation.<sup>1</sup>

#### *The Non-Christian Cults*

The formation of independent Christian churches was preceded and accompanied by the appearance of non-Christian religious movements which opened the way for them. One of the best known is the cult of Mumbo, created at the beginning of the century in the province of Nyanza. A summary of the account of the movement given by Audrey Wipper of Makerere follows.<sup>2</sup>

In 1908, a year after the British administration had been set up in southern Nyanza, Mumboism appeared. As is the case of most such movements, it is difficult to establish the exact date and circumstances of its foundation. The version given here is the one usually told.

One day Onyango Dunde, a Luo of the canton of Alego, was taking his ease outside his house on the shore of Lake Victoria. A huge serpent, Mumbo, who, according to legend, lived in the waters of the lake, reared up before him and swallowed him, then immediately disgorged him into his hut

and spoke to him. He presented himself as a powerful god who lived in the sun and in the lake. He announced the departure of the Europeans and of their corrupt religion and promised an era of abundance for his adorers. They must let their hair grow, refrain from washing, and dress themselves in animal skins, sacrificing their cattle and giving up cultivating their fields. A cataclysm would soon take place and annihilate their enemies, preparing for the coming of the kingdom of the elect, who would live in the houses of the whites and gather taxes in their stead. Mumboism spread rapidly among the Luo and their neighbors, especially the Gusii of the Kisii region.

While waiting for the promised cataclysm, the Mumbo faithful began to buy lamps for the darkness to come, stopped cultivating their fields, refused to work on road gangs, and sacrificed their cattle. However, as the end of the world delayed in coming, they had to return to work in order not to starve to death, and little by little the sect organized itself to endure.

Most of its activities were ritual: sacrifices to Mumbo to fight off drought and grasshoppers, communal feasts celebrating coming abundance, rites destined to appease the spirits and renew the cord of life broken by sickness or death. Places of worship were built on the top of hills or at a distance from inhabited areas. The roles of the members of the sect were differentiated into community head, itinerant preacher, prophet, healer, etc. Here many of the traits of the Legio Maria can be found. Furthermore, possession was sought not only by women, as was the case in traditional society, but by men, too. Ecstasy was achieved at sunrise after a night of collective preparation reinforced by the use of Indian hemp.

The cult of Mumbo was first considered as a perverted form of Christianity and combatted as such by the missions and the administration. The exposure of the perversions of the sect, quoted by Audrey Wipper and reproduced here, recall the criticism in the daily papers at the time the Legio appeared. The author writes: "As was to be expected from a retrogressive religion, which not only encouraged but

ordained idleness and uncleanness, it was not long before its adherents, having nothing to do or to think about, began to indulge in unpleasant practices which the normal Jalu, however uncivilized he might be, held in abhorrence. The communal enjoyment of women, including incest, bhang smoking, sodomy, and even bestiality, all made their appearance, though these practices seem to have been more common in South Kavirondo whither the cult has spread and has been received with enthusiasm." <sup>3</sup>

Audrey Wipper distinguishes two aspects of the Mumbo cult: first, its nativistic appearance, for it seems to reject European customs and to extol a return to traditions; then its contributions towards a utopian perspective, for it rejects the colonial regime as well as the authority of the elders and proposes a new social order. Indeed, we ought not to consider the Mumbo cult as a simple return to tradition. The rejection of clothing and property, for example, is directed above all at the authority of the missions and the administration, which were trying to impose a new political, social, and economic system. Furthermore, despite the cult's open opposition to Christianity, it derives some of its inspiration from it. Thus the story of Onyango being swallowed by a serpent and thereafter becoming a prophet, while it is in accord with a traditional myth, also recalls the story of Jonah. Similarly, the creator God of the Luo, who is manifested in all extraordinary natural phenomena, is personalized under Christian influence, and one of his manifestations, Mumbo, the mythical serpent of Lake Victoria, becomes his incarnation, and the characteristics of the God of the Old Testament are attributed to him.

Opposition to customs, in spite of the nativistic appearance of the cult, is particularly clear in regard to circumcision. The Luo did not practice it but it played a fundamental role in the social system of their neighbors, the Gusii, who were numerous in the movement. Repeatedly, in 1920, 1922, and up until 1956, the sect tried to suppress circumcision among the Gusii, although without success and with considerable disturbance.<sup>4</sup>



Audrey Wipper explains these two contradictory aspects of the Mumbo cult in the following way. The British administration, by establishing an indirect system of government among the Gusii, had reversed the hierarchy of the clans, placing the heads of the dominant clans under the authority of those of the subject clans. Besides, it chose chiefs from among the young generation educated by the missions, instead of nominating the heirs according to the customary genealogical seniority. Incapable of contending with the administration, the dispossessed dominant clans then tried to destroy the clan system itself and, at the same time, to protect their members against the Western influences which had brought about the disorganization of society.

Among the Luo the situation was politically quite different, and the cult of Mumbo did not have the same character of collective reaction against an order imposed by the colonizer. It was rather a question of individual reactions by those who were personally, and for different reasons, touched more than others by the evolution of their society under Western influence. This was particularly true of the young.

When the Germans came from Tanganyika and invaded Kisii in 1914, the members of the sect believed that the prophecies announcing the departure of the English had come to pass and they pillaged the missions and the town. In spite of violent reprisals and numerous deportations, the adepts of the cult continued to multiply, giving the administration much concern. A little later, a woman, Bonairiri, created a variant of Mumboism and rallied a group of faithful around a prophet Zakawa. According to popular belief, Zakawa had announced the details of the arrival and establishment of the Europeans and had then died under mysterious circumstances. His funeral was not properly conducted and his faithful awaited his return. To avoid trouble, the District Commissioner had Bonairiri arrested and dispersed the other members of the sect, without, however, effecting the complete disappearance of the movement, which pursued its career in the south of Nyanza. Mumboism,

temporarily eclipsed, experienced a strong resurgence at the beginning of the 1930's, as it has in every period of economic depression.<sup>5</sup>

Another movement, the Dini ya Maria, came to light in the same region around 1950. The foundress, Maria Ragot, and her husband, Paul Adiki, preached the imminent end of colonization and taxes. They were prosecuted by the administration between 1954 and 1960 for illegal meetings at a time when they were trying to gather together a number of small local sects into a powerful movement on the provincial level. According to my informants, Paul and his wife joined Simeo when the Legio was beginning, bringing their disciples with them into the new movement.

Mumboism and cults of the same kind clearly prefigure the Christian movements which have developed from the missionary churches. We find in them the principal characteristics of the African churches which will be treated in detail in the coming chapters: a search for an explanation of the chaos of society and a remedy for it; extreme decentralization of structure and close kinship with traditional structures; elaboration of a ritual founded on coincidences between local tradition and Christian principles. This genesis is particularly plain in churches of the Legio type and brings to light certain fundamental traits of Luo culture, in which mysticism and spontaneity contrast with a liking for progress and practical ability.

The British administration never succeeded in completely wiping out the cult of Mumbo, and in 1966 about five hundred adherents could be counted in the southern part of Nyanza. However, little by little it has lost its relevance to the problems and aspirations of society, and Christian movements better adapted to the new situation are replacing it.

### *History of the African Churches*

In 1918, some years after the appearance of Mumboism, the first independent African church was founded in Kenya.

Johanes Oalo, who had followed the teachings of the Catholic Church and of the Anglican Church Missionary Society, received a revelation and left the Church Missionary Society to found the Nomyia ("I have received") Luo Mission (the Nomyia Church in our text). Two years later Alfayo Odongo, also an Anglican, had a vision which confided to him the mission of creating the Roho ("Holy Spirit") movement. Becoming a pastor, he separated from the mother church in 1934 after serious outbreaks which ended some months later with the martyrdom of Odongo and his companion Lawi. Their own co-religionists burned Odongo alive in his hut and ran Lawi through with spears in the yard of his farm. Finally, in 1932, Kivuli, like Saint Paul, received a vision and founded within the framework of the Pentecostal Assemblies a new movement which gave birth in 1956 to the African Israel Neneveh Church (the Israel Church in our text).

This first wave of movements, anterior to the Second World War, reveals certain particular characteristics. The forms of expression and of religious experience are largely inspired by Luo tradition, with the accent on possession, ecstasy, exorcism, dreams, and all the means of direct communication with the supernatural world. Their organization shows how much they were inspired by the make-up of the missionary churches from which their founders came. They propose to their faithful numerous prohibitions, obligations, and external signs of identification with the group. Lastly, they have to do with an African redemption, given by a special revelation to the founder as an intermediary between God and his people who become the new Holy People, the African Israel.

A second wave of movements took place after the war in relation to the Revival movement, which came from Uganda and sent tremors throughout the Anglican Church at Nyanza. Beginning in 1938, it ended in 1957 with the foundation of the Church of Christ in Africa (the Johera Church in our text). I shall summarize here the story of the Revival as given in *A Place to Feel at Home*, a book written by Ogot and Welbourn and already quoted.

The two principal themes of the Revival were salvation by the blood of Jesus and public confession. Under the direction of Ismael Noo, an eloquent preacher and dynamic leader, a little group began to go through the country, preaching in the marketplaces and composing many songs, which were their best publicity agents. Converted women left husbands and families and came to join the group. Finally Noo, accused of immoral practices, especially of preaching communal sex life as a divine institution, separated from the Anglican Church in 1948 in order to found his own movement, the Christian Evangelical Union.

On the margin of the Revival another Anglican, Bildad Kaggya, a Kikuyu, founded a movement which he left in 1948 to dedicate himself to politics. His Luo disciples then decided to assume their independence and in 1955 formed the Voice of World Wide Salvation and Healing Revival (in our text the Warrouk ["Salvation"] Church).

Among the partisans of the Revival who remained in the Anglican Church, a new trend formed, above all among the laity, that of the Joremo ("the people of blood") who preached salvation by the blood of Christ. They followed a policy of discrimination in regard to those who did not belong to their group and seriously proposed to secede from the Church. To combat this tendency another movement was formed at Maseno in 1953 under the aegis of the hierarchy, whose power was threatened. This had the support of pastors and laity irritated by the pride of the Joremo. They insisted on the necessity of remaining in the church and on the commandment of love. They were called Johera ("the people of love") because they preached salvation by faith and love which saves once for all. The Joremo, on the contrary, believed that sin continued to burden Christians, who must be saved anew each time that they fall back into error.

However, the Johera, under the guidance of the Reverend A. M. Ajouga, a Luo, judged it necessary to establish a really indigenous church. The European hierarchy were alarmed and began to follow a policy of discrimination in regard to

the young Johera clergy. This profited the Joremo who, on the advice of the leaders of the Revival, then sought to reenter the bosom of the Anglican Church. The hierarchy, and in particular the assistant bishop, Olang, a BaLuyia, and a former member of the Johera group, tried to put an end to the Johera movement, first by persuasion then by force. The leaders of the movement were transferred so that they came under the authority of pastors belonging to the opposite faction. They were forbidden to hold public meetings but ignored these orders.

The final crisis came in 1957. Olang invited the Bishop of Mombasa to Maseno to attempt a reconciliation, but Ajouga refused the terms proposed, which amounted to the dissolution of his movement, and replied that the Johera had saved the church and supported Olang from the beginning of his career, although he was not a Luo. Then, by order of the bishop, Ajouga and many of his colleagues were suspended from functioning and accused of being anti-missionary and anti-European. The bishop then withdrew their licenses and called upon them either to reaffirm their attachment to the Anglican Church or to obtain government registration as a different society. The Johera unanimously chose the second solution. The final step was taken when, after a fruitless appeal to the Archbishop of Canterbury to obtain the consecration of a bishop for their new church, the Johera found themselves forced to elect their own bishop. Ajouga was chosen and the Church now claims seventy thousand adherents.

The two principal movements of this period, the Warrouk Church and the Johera Church, are very different from those of the preceding period. They are basically open to the world. They use no special vestments and have no prohibitions except those common to most African churches—against dancing, tobacco, and alcohol. The doctrine is almost entirely borrowed from the mother church and, in contrast to the first movements, no effort is made to reinterpret Christian doctrine. What they accomplish is more the Africanization of a structure and hierarchy rather than of a

world view. The message itself is not called into question.

The third wave of movements took place after independence came to the countries of East Africa, as the thesis of Vittorio Lanternari illustrates.<sup>6</sup> Up until that time, the Anglican Church had supplied the majority of separatist groups, but after independence the Catholic Church took over that role. The first incidents took place in 1952 with the *Dini ya Maria* and its avatars. In 1962 the *Legio Maria* made its appearance. It was a veritable tidal wave which swept up sixty thousand faithful in a few months.

The story of the *Legio* is complex and is related to the tradition that has been pointed out concerning Mumboism. The intention here is not to provide a historical account—others have done this in a systematic way<sup>7</sup>—but to give the version of the facts as they are circulated among the faithful themselves. What is of interest is not the naked truth but the garments with which the social group have clothed it.

The *Legio* possesses at least two recognized prophets, Gaudencia Aoko and Simeo Ondeto, to whom legend attributes the same adventures. Other people, however, prepared for their mission and, among these, two men were particularly influential.

Well before the first movements which led to the formation of the *Legio*, a man called Jeremiah Onditi separated from the Catholic Church and set himself up as an independent priest, thus preparing people's minds for future developments. This separation had its origin in a simple mistake. Onditi was an aid to a military chaplain and when the latter fell ill, Onditi continued to conduct prayers and to baptize while waiting for the chaplain's replacement. One day he received a notice from the administration. On the envelope the name of the chaplain had been crossed off and Onditi's name put in its place without the title of "reverend" having been crossed off too. Onditi believed that he had been named a priest. From that day on, he began to say Mass and on returning to his country conducted himself just like a priest although he was married. In spite of the efforts of the parish priest to convince him of his mistake, he continued to

follow this career until his death fifteen years later.

A mistake like Onditi's is a rare event. But a number of catechists, unable to become priests, have left the Catholic Church to become priests in an African church which requires less of them in matters of education and celibacy. It seems that the Catholic Church, with the entire liturgy centered in the person of the priest, does not offer sufficient outlets for the religious aspirations of the laity.

Another interesting aspect of Legio beginnings is the presence beside the founder, Simeo, of a certain Okelo, who had received from his ancestors the power of expelling spirits. Only after meeting him and obtaining this power from him did Simeo begin to expel spirits and to transmit this power to his disciples. From heaven, Simeo had received the mission of preaching and healing by prayer. But the power of expelling spirits came to him from Luo tradition, in such a way that a synthesis took place in his person between ancestral beliefs and Christian inspiration. Later on Okelo, who was a Catholic, left Simeo because the latter made himself out to be Christ reincarnated, but even after that Simeo retained the power to expel spirits.

The story of Onditi and Okelo allows us to understand how a big movement like the Legio Maria can be organized. Different events take place simultaneously in many places, preparing minds for converging legends and tales. Prophecy, revelations, apparitions, and miracles happen throughout the country. The one thing lacking is a central figure to concentrate all these movements, each expressive of the same thoughts, the same problems. The Legio is the heir of Mumboism, of the Dini ya Maria, of Jeremiah Onditi, and many others.

According to accounts, Gaudencia Aoko lived in a locality called Nyabourongo near the border between Kenya and Tanzania. She was a pagan. One day two of her children died accidentally and mysteriously. Gaudencia began to denounce the power of the sorcerers and the bad faith of the magicians, who extorted money from the credulous without possessing any supernatural power. She came to Tanzania

with her youngest child, found a man by the name of Marcellianus Orongo, who preached and baptized. She stayed the night in his house and the next day he baptized her and they then left together for Kenya, where he baptized many other people. There they met Simeo Ondeto, who gave Gaudencia the power of baptizing and expelling spirits. She then began a campaign against sorcerers and magicians, burning amulets and objects used in magical practices and in controlling spirits in the traditional way. She preached healing by prayer: "...dressed in a long white robe, a crucifix in her hand and a rosary around her neck, the prophetess roused the sick, put her rosary around their neck, recited prayers and chants until a state of trance was induced."<sup>8</sup> This technique of healing, which will be described in detail in the sixth chapter, is widely used by the Legio. Gaudencia seems to have her own organization, coexisting with the Legio Maria headed by Simeo. Her teaching is a little different; she does not say Mass; her faithful do not observe the prohibitions of the Legio; and they are baptized according to the Catholic rite without any of the additions and solemn promises appended by the Legio. Her influence is more localized and limited than Simeo's. He is, at least nominally, the real head of the movement.

Simeo Ondeto is much better known in the district of North Mara, for he himself came there at the beginning of his career to recount his visions and to preach the new religion. According to the opinion of some of the faithful who have now left him because he has made himself Christ, "Simeo is the ugliest of men, and Jesus would not have chosen a body as repulsive as that to come visit his own." Other reasons have led numerous enthusiasts of the first days to return to the bosom of the Catholic Church or to rejoin other independent groups. The African Catholic Legion, for example, has been founded by Marcellianus Orongo and a certain number of the first faithful of Simeo, unhappy with his pretensions to divinity. These pretensions were not at first a part of his preaching. The idea formed little by little in the minds of Simeo and his familiars, following on a series of



fortuitous analogies and dramatic productions by the prophet himself. But Christ or not, Simeo is at least a prophet for his faithful and, in any case, a martyr (of the administration and the missionaries), a man chosen by God to proclaim the way to salvation.

On the margin of the Legio Maria is another movement, the African Catholic Legion just mentioned. Its founder, Marcellianus Orongo, baptized Gaudencia and was one of the first and most ardent preachers of the Legio. His vocation had its genesis in his personal history. In his youth he was a devout Catholic and worked for a number of years for the White Fathers at the Kowak mission. He wanted to become a priest but, being married, had to content himself with becoming a catechist until the day when the priest at the mission discovered that his first wife, whom Marcellianus had said was dead, was still living. He was convicted of bigamy, excluded from the sacraments, and dismissed from his post. He began to preach and to baptize independently, a little before Simeo made his start, but his influence remained local. A year after Simeo's visit to Tanzania, he decided to separate himself from the Legio and its excesses in order to observe as closely as possible the Roman Catholic tradition. His community followed him, but under the guidance of its aging leader the movement today is reduced to about fifty or perhaps a hundred faithful and seems destined to die with its founder.

Another group, with no relations to the Legio, was established between 1962 and 1965 on the border between Kenya and Tanzania and bears more resemblance to the Johera or Warrouk Churches in its style and organization.

It consists of a movement founded by Joash Okoth, a former Seventh Day Adventist who lived near Ikoma, and his principal assistant, Musa Ondiek. The movement is at present in its formative period and does not yet have a definite name. The one heard most often is Fweny Mar Lam ("Foundation of Prayer"). According to the local prophet, the faithful of this church are more numerous in Kenya than in Tanzania. In fact, it seems that in Kenya it is a prosperous movement,

according to what I have been able to learn while visiting one of their communities in the region of Alego, but I am not at all sure that it is the same movement, in spite of the insistence of the faithful and of the priest who accompanied me. Their church was too rich and too old, with a sheet-metal roof and cement floor, well-carpentered benches covered with goat skins, to belong to a new movement unless it were a question of a whole Adventist or Pentecostal community which had unanimously chosen to follow the new prophet. But in Tanzania it is clear that the movement is recent and we shall study it independently of its ties with Kenya.

Joash Okoth relates how when he prayed with the Adventists he could not much believe in God because he wanted to drink beer and to smoke, but he felt the need to be saved. He then turned to the Pentecostal Church and became an itinerant preacher, sometimes visiting Kenya, sometimes Tanzania until 1965 when he built his own church and instituted his own rites. The faithful are almost all former Adventists and Pentecostals who followed him when he became independent. Help from the Warrouk founder also established rapport with that church and the new movement. As I see it, it is simply a question of a micro-church among a number of others of the same kind, which are attached to the Protestant tradition of a Christianity essentially based on the Bible and extremely decentralized. The movement has four permanent communities in Tanzania, with no large number of faithful in any except for Ikoma, where the founder lives. The Church possesses, according to Musa Ondiek, two elected priests, a bishop who is the founder himself, and some lay assistants. But, in fact, no organized hierarchy exists which is capable of controlling the activities of the communities.

This third wave of movements, dominated by the appearance of the Legio Maria, seems to me to be a reaction against the political game. Independence was awaited as a real reversal of the social order which would work in favor of the disadvantaged, but hopes were disappointed. Nothing has changed; competition has become more severe in the social and economic sphere; and the paternalistic domination of the

colonial power, in which the relationships between occupied and occupier were immediately comprehensible to everybody, has been replaced by the mystery of democratic machinery with a complexity that lies beyond the reach of the illiterate rural masses. Powerless to control their destiny by human means, they turn to the supernatural world and particularly to movements which provide them with an explanation of their problems and a remedy for them.

If political defeat can be counted among the factors which contribute to the formation of African churches, it is interesting to learn that these are trying, as pressure groups, to have political influence on the provincial, and even the national, level. If the mass of the faithful turn towards religion in lieu of politics, the leaders, who most often live in an urbanized milieu, have a practical knowledge of the machinery of public affairs and often make skillful use of it. Thus the Legio has known how to benefit from the support of ex-Vice-President Odinga Oginga, himself a Luo. This protection permitted it to triumph over its enemies during its beginnings and to gain a position of respectability after its official registration. On the other hand, it has disappointed its protectors by proving incapable of serving as a means of maneuvering the masses.

The majority of African churches are, however, too small to play a political role by themselves or even to acquire any status whatever in general society. As they have always been refused affiliation with the Christian Council of Kenya,<sup>9</sup> they have sought to group together and to form an African Christian public opinion. The different attempts made between 1954 and 1960 ended with the creation in that year of the United Churches of Africa, bringing together five independent churches. This first organization was changed in 1962 to the Kenya African Independent Churches Fellowship, which counted three more members. Finally, in 1964 the Kenya African Independent Churches Communion of East Africa was founded with three more members.<sup>10</sup> This organization holds meetings periodically at which problems of African Christianity and questions of national interest are

discussed. To these, political figures are invited. The death of Tom Mboya in 1969 and the events which followed in Kenya were the occasions of such manifestations. In spite of these efforts, however, their influence on national life remains weak.

*Classification of the African Churches among the Luo*

Although it was not proposed to treat the subject in a typological way, it seems useful to analyze what follows by dividing the churches into two groups according to their resemblance to two models—the Johera Church and the Legio, chosen as the most important and as clearly differing from one another in their fundamental characteristics. The Nomyia, Roho, and Israel churches are classed among movements of the Legio type. The Pentecostal Assemblies, the Warrouk and Fweny Mar Lam churches, and the African Catholic Legion are placed among movements of the Johera type.

This classification compares with the one made by B. Sundkler of the independent churches of South Africa. The Zionist aspects of churches of the Legio type are sufficiently plain, and the churches of the Johera type recall Ethiopian groups. However, as Denise Paulme emphasizes, "...in reality the differences are less decided, the physiognomy of each new religion results from an infusion of elements which are almost always the same."<sup>11</sup> This infusion varies slightly from one church to another, and one moves unconsciously from a church of the Legio kind to one of the Johera: it is less a question of types than of a continuum of which these two church-types form the extremes.

The detailed characteristics of each type will appear in the chapters to come. At present it is enough to indicate what distinguishes them. Churches of the Legio type arise as a movement with a revolutionary spirit, bringing a new message, destined first of all for Africans, to give them a privileged place among other peoples on the day of the Last Judgment. These churches depend on their revealed charac-

ter: it is not a matter of an African version of Christian revelation but of a really new revelation which points out a special way of salvation for Africans, more efficacious for its beneficiaries than that proposed by the missionary churches. These African churches place themselves in direct contact with the Holy Spirit, who inspires, enlightens, and guides them.

Churches of the Johera type present themselves as an African version of the Western churches from which they have issued. It is not a matter of a new message but of the Africanization of the structures and customs of the mother church. Thus the Johera Church wants nothing else but to be the African version of the Anglican Church, whose doctrine, hierarchical organization, and rites it tries to preserve as faithfully as possible. In the same way, the Pentecostals, although they are practically autonomous, cling to their affiliation with the Canadian missionaries. As to the Fweny Mar Lam Church, it seems to be grafted on two missionary groups, the Seventh Day Adventists and the Pentecostals, but it is still too early to make a judgment as to its development. On the contrary, the Warrouk Church and the African Catholic Legion have not kept the hierarchical organization or, in the case of the former, the rites of their mother churches. Neither have they replaced them by a real Africanization of structures and customs.

It is not my intention to exaggerate the importance of this classification, which has only an essentially practical purpose. The faithful of these churches are distinguished from each other only by nuances as to their origin, their problems, and their conduct. My objective, in making these distinctions, is chiefly to bring out, beyond their superficial differences, the fundamental kinship of the churches under study.

### *The African Churches in the District of North Mara*

The first chapters brought out the dependence of the Luo of Tanzania on those of Kenya in the cultural, social, and

economic spheres. It is just the same in the religious sphere: the first Anglican and Catholic missionaries were established in the region of Kisumu and spread southward from there.

*Introduction of African Churches into North Mara.* The movement of ideas and men southward finds confirmation in the story of the African churches. Most of them were founded in Kenya near a mission center and were afterwards propagated in the more backward and remote areas by Christian influence. It is possible to give an exact date when some movements were introduced in North Mara and the circumstances are generally known.

The Nomyia Church, founded in Kenya in 1918, was introduced in North Mara in 1929 by an immigrant from Kenya. He settled at Ochuna, where he founded a first community. With the development of the movement in the region, he became bishop, then archbishop; then relinquishing the conduct of daily affairs to his assistant, he settled in another region of the district because his fields had become exhausted. In spite of the departure of its leader, the Ochuna community has remained the center of the Nomyia Church in North Mara. A priest and a bishop, both polygamous, live there with their families. Other communities are formed when the faithful live too far from the principal center to attend services regularly, but they lack dynamism and the domination of the Ochuna group acts as an obstacle to the expansion of the movement in the district.<sup>12</sup>

The Roho Church, founded in Kenya in 1933, was introduced in the same way—by an immigrant from Kenya—who settled with his family at Olando near Otochogo. This first community is also the most important, with about eighty faithful and a big chapel capable of holding a hundred, although it is a little damaged by time and weather. However, the Roho Church has not observed the same policy of centralization as the Nomyia Church, the more so because it has neither priest nor bishop in North Mara (at least in the major branch). The communities have multiplied under the direction of lay leaders capable of organizing the ordinary practice of religion, while members of the hierarchy come

from Kenya once a year to administer baptism, confirmation, and communion.

The minor branch of the Roho Church is called Musalaba ("Cross"), in reference to the emblem worn by its members, a red cross embroidered on a white background.<sup>13</sup> It was founded between 1960 and 1964 in connection with a personal quarrel. The community of Kitembe wished to have a resident priest and chose a certain Joel. But the other communities in the region, in agreement with the church hierarchy in Kenya, preferred a man connected by marriage with the head of the church. The dispute was resolved by the secession of Kitembe, followed by some groups in North Mara.

The Israel Church, founded in Kenya between the two wars, was introduced into Tanzania around 1950. It seems to have been brought first to the town of Musoma in South Mara. Luo workers adopted it on the spot and afterwards brought it back with them to North Mara. At any rate, it has made little progress in the district, where a single community was all that could be found.

The Pentecostal Assemblies also developed in Kenya during the same period, the 1950's. Founded in Kenya near Kisumu<sup>14</sup> in 1914 by Otto Keller, a Canadian missionary, they spread southward little by little. There are two resident pastors in North Mara but numerous communities are most often under the direction of lay leaders. Some of these receive a formation of a few weeks in a Bible school in Kenya and are then given supervision over groups of the faithful. But the multiplication of communities is not the work of missionaries but of immigrants who bring their religion with them.

The Johera Church comes next on the chronological list. After the rupture between the Anglican Church and the Johera movement in Kenya, the Anglican communities of North Mara were disturbed by contradictory rumors which came to them and sent emissaries to the Johera See at Maseno. Immediately these sent messengers to North Mara to explain what was happening and to ask the faithful to rally to

the new church. This many rural communities did, having no outside ties other than rare visits of a pastor or itinerant evangelists.

Earlier an account was given of the foundation of the Legio and its introduction into North Mara by a visit of the prophet himself at the request of the Catholic Legion of Mary at Tatwe and Kowak. These two regions are still the two principal centers of the movement in the district, the first being the residence of the bishop, Girpas Wayoga, and the other numbering more than a hundred faithful with a resident priest. Other communities were founded later, especially in these two regions, as can be seen from the map giving the location of the centers of worship.

The latest arrival is the Warrouk Church, brought in by an immigrant and his family in 1963. They set themselves up near the highway between Ingri and Utegi. The Church has not developed, however, and reckons a single community with a permanent building. As to the African Catholic Legion and the Fweny Mar Lam Church, they were founded in Tanzania and their story has already been told.

*Methods and Rhythm of Development.* In most of the cases described, the advance of the African churches in the district of North Mara did not come about by an organized effort of evangelization by the hierarchy established in Kenya, but either by a migratory movement of Luo to the south, which continues until today, or through the initiative of local Christians, members of a missionary church, who wanted to be informed about developments in their religion taking place in Kenya.

When an immigrant introduces a movement, as in the case of the Roho, Nomyia, and Israel churches, it develops slowly, by "contagion," radiating from a pole of growth. The first community forms around the immigrant and his family, for among the Luo a man of piety draws disciples to him. Other communities are formed as disciples multiply and spread out from the central pole. It seems that a progression of this sort is favored by the complete decentralization of the movement in the district and especially by the absence of resident mem-



bers of the official hierarchy of the church. These movements develop to the detriment of missionary churches and of one another. For the oldest churches, internal growth plays an important role, while the most dynamic movements can attract people who have not yet been touched directly by Christian teaching and who hesitate before the length and difficulty of the studies that must be undertaken in order to receive baptism in the Catholic Church, the principal missionary organization in the district. The form of increase from a pole of growth is, however, rather slow and runs a risk of slackening off as the initial dynamism of the movement gives place to routine.

In the case of the Johera and Legio churches, the mode and rhythm of progression has been different from the start. From the very beginning these new movements touched a number of communities and hundreds of the faithful left the mother church to embrace the new faith. Then the recruitment of members concerned almost exclusively baptized Christians. The Johera adopted a rhythm and mode of growth comparable to those churches introduced by immigrants. The Legio, on the contrary, has manifested a missionary zeal unique of its kind. Bands of the faithful, chiefly women, visit farms in surrounding communities, pray for the sick and exorcise devils, then afterwards explain to the patients that the cure cannot be complete if they fail to join the Legio.

An example will illustrate the point. Christina Akinyi, originally of the region of Suna in Kenya, had married a Luo of Tanzania and lived with him in the region of Wagire. Her first child was dead, and she was in very poor health, always bedridden, unable to help her husband's first wife on the farm. Weary of spending much money for her care without obtaining any results, her husband decided to ask the Legio to pray for his wife and thus cure her of the spirit which was tormenting her in this way. Although she was a Catholic, she could not refuse their prayers and she thought that when she felt better she would return to the Catholic Church. One afternoon the members of the Legio came to the farm, said

the rosary and other prayers for her and she immediately felt better. A meal was served to the visitors and they left before night.

Two weeks had passed since that day, when I met Christina returning from a Legio community where we had both assisted at Sunday Mass. She told me that she had no more trouble with her health although she still felt weak. She also said that before being seized by the evil spirit which was tormenting her, she was pregnant but that the spirit had arrested her pregnancy. But since she felt better, she knew that the baby was going to begin growing again. Christina wanted to re-enter the Catholic Church after her cure. But the members of the Legio told her that if you left the Catholic Church for the Legio, the priest would not let you return to the sacraments and, if she herself did not go to pray for others, her spirit would return to torment her. That Sunday for the first time, in spite of her weakness, she had gone to Mass in the Legio church, a walk of an hour and a half from her home.

We shall come back to this testimony which covers a typical feminine conversion. It is enough here to stress the way in which the Legio recruits its faithful: a person is first healed and afterwards persuaded that it is his duty and to his interest to remain in the community. This missionary effort was fruitful at the start, but growth has since slowed down, for there are only a limited number of people in the district susceptible of being reached in this way—in contrast to Kenya, where social disorganization is much more advanced, especially in regions near urban zones.

*The Situation of the African Churches in North Mara.*

A map of the centers of worship and a list of the principal numerical facts about the African churches will be of help in returning to that subject. The map of the centers of worship provides an effective census in the five Catholic Luo parishes in North Mara. I have visited a good number of these communities and the existence of others has been pointed out to me by different informants in each hamlet (*gweng'*). In spite of these precautions, the map

does not altogether agree with the information provided by the churches themselves as to the number of their communities. This occurs because the smallest groups meet privately at the home of one of the faithful, whereas the larger groups, that is, of at least a dozen adults, have a place of public prayer known to nonmembers.

The estimate of the number of the faithful is based on direct observation and not on an exact census, which was impossible for me to accomplish for lack of the necessary material means and, above all, because of the suspicious attitude of some groups who refused to answer any question having to do with people and names.

The evaluation made here rests on the following principles. In most of the cases observed, groups of ten to twenty adult faithful pray in the open under a tree with the exception of the Legio, who require a building for worship. For twenty adults, sometimes less, the community puts up a permanent building. So for all the communities which have been pointed out to me and which I have not visited myself, I have estimated the number of participants as twenty faithful, more or less, according to whether they met under a tree or in a chapel. For the communities which I have visited, I have counted the number of participants as equivalent to the number of active members of the community (the visitors taking the places of the sick and those away from home, always a goodly number). This method of estimating takes into account only the active members of the church and not the nominal members as the statistics of missionary churches do.

The estimate made in Table 1 includes only adult faithful. The number of people who regularly practice in the African churches should be about 2,550 with a possible margin of 500 more or less. The difference between the self-evaluation of the Legio and the map comes from a confusion of mind among my informants: with their distinctive costume, members of the Legio are easily spotted and nonmembers have a tendency to think that a center of worship exists wherever they see some long robes and rosa-

TABLE 1

*Chronological and Comparative List  
of the African Churches in North Mara*

Churches	Date of Founda- tion	Date of Intro- duction in North Mara	Number of Communities		Number of Faithful
			A	B	
Legio Type					
Nomyia	1918	1929	7	7	200
Roho (major br.)	1933	1947	10	17	300
Roho (minor br.)	—	1960	6	17	150
Israel	1947	?	—	4	50
Legio Maria	1962	1963	12	30	600
<u>Total</u>					1,300
Johera Type					
Pentecostals	1914	1950	—	33	600
Warrouk	1946	1963	2	2	20
Johera	1957	1957	20	13	500
African Catholic					
Legion	—	1963	2	2	50
Fweny Mar Lam	—	1965	4	3	80
<u>Total</u>					1,250

A = according to the information given by the church

B = according to the map of centers of worship (page 42')

ries. In fact, since a priest is necessary to celebrate the cult, centers for worship are few, but there are many little assemblies and small chapels where the faithful recite the rosary and have feasts, although they go elsewhere for Sunday Mass. In the Johera the situation is just the opposite: church leaders know of the existence of many small groups who have Sunday services at a particular home but they are so cautious in their religious attitude that, unless you know them personally, there is no way of knowing that they have a place for

worship. For the rest, my observations agree with the statements of the churches themselves.<sup>15</sup>

### *Conclusions about the Formation of African Churches*

The story of the African churches is thought-provoking. First of all, about their simultaneous appearance with the installation of the missionary churches among the Luo, and the establishment of the British colonial regime. Then everything happened as if Luo society, disorganized and threatened by the Western invasion, made use of the very ideology of its conquerors to stand up against them. Thus the Nomyia Church, the oldest of the African churches among the Luo, has, since 1918, held up to its faithful a prophet who is their security for heaven and the guarantee of their triumph-like Jesus for the whites and Mohammed for the Arabs.

The rise of the African churches depends on a number of factors. One of them has already been pointed out in preceding chapters: the formation of a social class which the transformation of society puts in a permanent and unfavorable situation in relation to the rest of the collectivity. Its members find it impossible to reach the higher echelons of the social hierarchy. Only individuals who have benefited by a Western style of education and have been brought up in a milieu already transformed by modern evolution are capable of orienting themselves in the new world and of finding a place in it. Deprived of social, economic, and political outlets, a part of the disadvantaged social class turn to the supernatural to find answers and compensation for their frustrations.

However, in order to create an African church rather than a non-Christian movement like the Mumbo cult, the message brought by the missionary churches has to have penetrated minds sufficiently to make it possible for the founder to use Christian mythology as a basis for his teaching. The formation and success of an African church necessarily depend upon the degree to which the atmosphere of the social class concerned has been Christianized.<sup>16</sup>

These two conditions being fulfilled, a third seems to play a considerable role. People often ask why Protestant churches give rise to more independent churches than the Catholic Church does. The answer is given that the Protestant churches are grounded, more than the Catholic, on reading and interpreting the Bible. A further explanation is offered that the multiplicity of Protestant churches is an invitation to division. These are only partial explanations. The essential reason why a propensity to separatism arises in Protestant churches is because it is much easier in these churches to create an opposition group within the mother church itself, due to the independence and initiative left to the laity in religious as well as administrative matters. In the Catholic Church, on the contrary, everything depends on the priest and the laity customarily play a passive role. In the first case, discontented members can organize themselves and when they leave the mother church, they found a rival movement. In the second case, discontented members leave the mother church individually to attach themselves to groups created by others.

Two examples illustrate the point. In the district of North Mara exist a number of Mennonite and Seventh Day Adventist communities. The latter have provided at least one African church in the district, Fweny Mar Lam. On the contrary, the Mennonite communities, which are under the constant supervision of their pastor, have lost some of their faithful but have formed no internal opposition groups.

Traditionally, independent movements from the Catholic Church are rare. Nevertheless, two African churches which have separated from her are found in the district. In this case it is through groups of the Catholic Legion of Mary, numerous and strong in Kenya, where they enjoyed great independence, that an opposition movement developed little by little and burst out shortly after independence. Through Legion of Mary groups it has been able to expand so widely, all the more so because its name, Legio Maria, confuses people and influences them in its favor. It does seem then that the

propensity for separatism comes from the internal possibilities for forming an opposition group.

The context in which the African churches are developing and the conditions necessary for their formation having been defined, we are now going to turn our attention to the response they make to the problems of Luo society.

## Notes

1. David B. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968).
2. Audrey Wipper, *The Cult of Mumbo* (Kampala: East Africa Institute of Social Research, Polygraph 374, 1966).
3. "Nyangweso: The Cult of Mumbo in Central and South Kavirondo," *J.E.A.U.N.H.S.*, 38-39, (1930): 13-17.
4. R. A. Levine, "An Attempt to Change the Gusii Initiation Cycle," *Man* (1959): pp. 117-120.
5. Bishop L. C. Usher-Wilson draws attention to a cult of the same kind in two neighboring tribes, the Kitosh and the Bagishu, called *Diny ya Misambwa*, that is, "Religion of the Ancestors." See the article of that title in *Uganda Journal* 16 (1952): 125-129.
6. Vittorio Lanternari writes: "In the greater part of black Africa, the political and economic colonialism imposed by the Europeans has given place to a socio-cultural colonialism imposed by the leading elite. This explains the manifestations of socio-religious revolt, the traditionalist and neotraditionalist movements tending to reinterpret political power mythologically." "Syncretismes, messianismes, néo-traditionalismes," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions* 19 (1966): 99-116.
7. Notably Father Piet Dirven, mentioned in the Introduction.
8. Lanternari, "Syncretismes, messianismes, néo-traditionalismes."
9. The "Christian Council of Kenya," a missionary organization.
10. F. B. Welbourn and B. A. Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).
11. Denise Paulme, "Une religion synchrétique en Côte d'Ivoire: le culte deïma," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 3 (1962): 5-90.
12. For the dates of the foundation and introduction of the African churches in North Mara see the chronological and comparative list on p. 97.

13. The major branch has the name of Roho Misanda, after the place where it was founded in Kenya.

14. Welbourn and Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, p. 73.

15. It is interesting to emphasize that the total figure for attendance in the African churches is slightly better than the number attending Sunday Mass in the Catholic parish, counting both the parish church and the out-stations. The criteria for practice which we have defined here seem to me better adapted to the African situation than those which have been worked out for an occidental situation, in particular by Gabriel Le Bras, *Etudes de Sociologie religieuse* (Paris: PUF, 1955), 2 vols.

16. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, p. 215.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# The Doctrine of the African Churches

The subject of this study is not Luo society itself, nor its evolution under Western influence since the beginning of the century. The preceding pages are only background for the analysis of the problem with which we are concerned—the basic community. The objective of this and the two following chapters is to bring out the place and role of the local community in the life of the African churches and their faithful. It is less a matter of establishing a viewpoint regarding the churches as a whole than of observing the social dimensions of religious activities at the everyday level. In the measure in which a religion is incarnated in an institution, the hinge point between the experience of the individual and of the group is the local community. I propose to show this articulation in the three areas of doctrine, organization, and religious activities. In contrast to the preceding chapters in which literature furnished the basis for the development of the thought, the materials used here are for the most part taken from direct observation of the phenomena described or from testimony which will be reproduced in its essentials.

### *The Role of Doctrine in the Local Community*

A study of the doctrine of the African churches presents a problem. At first sight it seems poor and sketchy, but without any doubt it plays an important role in the life of these movements.

Originally the doctrine emanates from the founder, who effects a first synthesis between different doctrinal sources: on one hand, the Bible and the teaching of the missionary

churches; on the other, Luo beliefs and traditions. The message of the founder forms what will be called "the expressed doctrine" of the church, completed by new revelations or pronouncements throughout the years. The means of communication for the diffusion of the message is most often oral tradition, although most of the churches have a basic book, written by the founder, as in the Nomyia and Roho churches, or borrowed from the mother church, as in the Legio and the Johera Church. As a matter of fact, few of the faithful know how to read, and the local leaders themselves have so much trouble deciphering the words that they cannot get the meaning.

When the message is received, a second synthesis takes place, this time between the expressed doctrine and what will be called the diffused doctrine, a common ground of beliefs and ideas which serves as a reservoir for the founder and the faithful to draw on for the elaboration and comprehension of the doctrinal whole. In fact the social group from which the founder comes and to whom he addresses himself possesses a particular culture through which the message of the church is received and interpreted. The presence of the diffused doctrine explains and compensates for the apparent poverty of the expressed doctrine, reworking it at the same time that it is received: "Because the spirit of God illumines his saints as spokesmen, they are enabled to apprehend, express, and communicate as much of his truth as they are open to. By the same token, we who are hearers understand, on the basis of an affinity of spirit, the message which they convey to us in oral or written form." <sup>1</sup>

### *Expressed Doctrine*

The African churches have been founded by former faithful of missionary churches, often by men who have themselves taken part in evangelization as catechists and even as pastors. For this reason one of the principal sources of the expressed doctrine of the African churches is missionary teaching dealing with historical facts as well as moral and

theological principles. In a more or less altered form this teaching has provided the founders with data from which to elaborate their message. God the Father, the Holy Spirit, Jesus the Savior (except in the Nomyia Church), the Blessed Virgin (in the Legio), salvation, and the Last Judgment are the fundamental points acquired from the start.

Depending on the religious origin of the founder, the accent is placed more on some aspects of Christian doctrine than on others. In the Legio the cult of the Blessed Virgin is so important that most prayers and hymns are addressed to her and the rosary is the basic element in every part of the liturgy as well as a powerful instrument in the warfare against evil. The influence of the Seventh Day Adventists (S.D.A.) makes itself felt in an apocalyptic trend encountered in numerous churches. A pentecostal vein is recognizable in the frequent use of biblical themes borrowed, in particular, from Genesis and the importance accorded the gifts of the Spirit. The influence of Mennonites, Seventh Day Adventists, and Pentecostals are all found in prohibitions against dancing, tobacco, and alcohol. Biblical prohibitions about food have great acceptance in churches of the Legio type, thanks to the combined influence of Seventh Day Adventists and Islam.<sup>2</sup>

The knowledge acquired during their catechumenate or their activities in a missionary organization furnish the doctrinal base for their movements. The reading of Sacred Scripture, often oriented by this initial knowledge, supplies some supplementary elements. But the texts are invoked to justify the church's point of view, often in contravention of the general sense of the passage.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning with these biblical and Christian elements, the founders have elaborated their message. They have returned to certain traditional themes, such as the struggle against evil spirits, and have taken up problems posed by modern evolution such as colonial oppression and the division between rich and poor, reinterpreting them in function of the Christian dichotomy, the dialectic of good and evil. Rather than supply new beliefs in contradiction of the old, Christianity has provided new criteria for judging and new dimensions

for understanding the meaning of human life. All preexisting notions find their place in a Christian universe, along with a modernized conception of the world in function of socioeconomic evolution.

*The Doctrine of the Legio.* The founders' personalities have played an important role in the formation of their churches and the nature of their message. The distinction that has been established between churches of the Legio type and those of the Johera kind depends in part on their different origins. Movements belonging to the first group are the product of a revelation received by a prophet: his mission has been entrusted to him directly by the divine will.

The message of Simeo Ondeto, the principal prophet of the Legio, is particularly rich. The people who have reported the visions described here have heard them from his own mouth. One of these is Joseph Kasia, the priest of the Kowak community, originally from Kisumu and formed in the "seminary" of the Legio in that region. A woman, Celimena, who was among the first disciples of Simeo but has since returned to the Catholic Church, made an equal contribution to this account. By doing this, she incurred the wrath and blows of her husband, a prominent lay leader of the Legio, but this confession seemed to her an act of reparation to the Catholic Church, which she had temporarily betrayed. Other informants confirmed these two accounts and filled in some specific details. In spite of the very different points of view of the two principal informants, however, the similarity between their accounts is striking, especially in what concerns the apprehension of the sacred and the notion of the divine intervention in daily life. The information received has been arranged below and gives an account of Simeo's doctrine from its beginnings.

Simeo was born in the region of Kano, Kenya, where he was baptized at the Catholic mission. He afterwards became a catechist in the region of Kisumu-Central.

Because he taught without receiving a salary, the other catechists had a grudge against him for not backing up their

demands. One day as he was going to teach at the church, he found a dead animal in his path, put there by his enemies. He threw it aside and from that moment began to shiver and to have a bad headache. He taught for a few minutes, then, as he felt worse and worse, he left the church and started home. At a crossing in the path, a trench had been dug and an egg placed in it. He stepped on the egg and broke it. His sickness grew worse and blood flowed from his nose and mouth.

When he arrived home at night, he could not even find the entrance to the farm. He called his brother's wife, who helped him get to his house. Seeing his state, she cried, "Now if you are going to die, who will take me to wife should my husband die." She offered him food but he could not eat. At that moment he heard the first bell from heaven; it was eleven o'clock at night. At midnight he heard the second and at two o'clock in the morning the third. Right after the last bell he saw celestial beings coming down from heaven to seek him. When a person dies, his body is in one corner and his soul in another and he sees his relatives weeping before he is carried away.

Once having left his body, his soul was brought by the Angel Gabriel across seven plains. The last, called the sheep plain, was covered with sheep and scattered trees. Paradise itself was a very flat plateau covered with very short, very green grass surrounded by a high barbed-wire fence with one gate guarded by angels. Within were European mansions of different degrees, as brilliant as the sun, where the saints, the angels, and our Lady live. The Blessed Trinity lives apart in a place called Armos. There are many different regions in heaven.

When Simeo entered paradise, he saw among the elect the Luo who had been government officials. He also saw those who were in hell, particularly the indigenous chiefs of Central and Suna, Kenya, all the police, and many Europeans who had made Africans suffer. He was thus able to warn those he knew on his return to earth.

He also saw three religions: the Catholics were in heaven with the faithful of the Legio (who consider themselves

Catholics); the Anglicans were so close to hell that they could feel the heat; the Moslems were between the two. When these reservoirs overflow, the end of the world will come.

When he stood at the gate of paradise ready to go down to earth again, he heard a voice, God's, which ordered him to drive out demons, and to tell the people to pray fervently and to renounce sin, dancing, tobacco, and alcohol. At that moment the name of Legio Maria was revealed to him. He was also forbidden to accept money for ministerial functions or in the form of an annual tax (*zaka*). Those who did such actions would be punished by burning in an ocean of flames; those who did good deeds would be joined to the choir of the elect. The form of the earthly church was not revealed to him at that moment but afterwards, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Simeo has received other visions since. When he expels spirits, he often falls asleep and on waking up recounts how he has been transported to heaven where our Lady receives him with a plateful of rice and sends him back to earth in a grand conveyance with eight seats.

When Simeo finished his visit to heaven, he was forcibly reclothed with his dead body. This was very painful. At that moment he became conscious. He had remained dead for a day<sup>4</sup> and had not yet been buried.

Returned to life, he began to preach as God had commanded him during his sojourn in the hereafter, imposing hands on his disciples to give them the power to baptize and to expel spirits.<sup>5</sup> God had not been very precise in his recommendations, and Simeo turned to the Holy Spirit. He did not have the intention of founding a new church. In the beginning he sent those whom he freed from devils to be baptized at the Catholic mission. Because of him, however, the missionaries refused to baptize his faithful and he found himself forced to ordain his own priests so that the new converts might receive the sacraments.

Celimena and other members of the Catholic Legion of Mary had heard the resurrection and preaching of Simeo talked about in Kenya. One day a man came to a meeting of the local section of the Legion of Mary at Tatwe to make

contact with the Catholics. He told them that the only way of getting Simeo to come to Tanzania was by going through the organization to which he belonged, for his group was associated with the Legion of Mary in Kenya. After talking it over, two women, one of them Celimena, were chosen to go find him. They found him in the region of Suna, Kenya, where he was teaching a large crowd, wearing a number of rosaries around his neck and blessing the people.

That day he was getting ready to go to surprise a Catholic priest at a nearby mission to ask him why he refused to baptize polygamous people. He said it was necessary to make a surprise visit for, if the priests knew he was coming, they would leave their mission. This time a priest had baptized some people and said Mass. When the ceremony was finished, Simeo accosted the priest as he came out of church, but the priest refused to talk with him and went into his office to register the baptisms. During this time the Catholics and Simeo's disciples prayed the Catena, the special prayers of the Legion of Mary, thereafter adopted by the new movement. After that Simeo began to preach against the priests who took money for baptizing.

Hearing Simeo's insults, the priest went to get the police and, as Simeo was following him, he asked him to wait a little. Then he took his car to get the police and the priests of a nearby mission. During this time, Simeo and his disciples went to pray for a dying child. Celimena was at a distance and did not see what happened but was told that Simeo had cured the child. Then the priest, accompanied by reinforcements, returned. He asked Simeo where he got the Legio from.

"From heaven," answered Simeo.

"And where does this book of heaven come from?" again asked the priest.

"Here is a ladder to climb above. But you are a hyena: you went to get the police against me, while I am sent by God to finish the work which remains to be done."

The police went away since he had not struck anyone. It was three o'clock in the afternoon. A dark cloud covered the

sky; in its center was the sun surrounded by a crown of clouds. Simeo pointed out this sign in the sky as a proof that he had been sent by God. Suddenly the cloud opened up like a theater curtain. This Simeo interpreted as a sign of coming independence. All were frightened and sang a hymn to the Blessed Virgin, thinking that the end of the world had come.<sup>6</sup> The assembled faithful even said that it rained inside the priest's house but that was a lie, added Celimena.

Simeo chose some of his disciples to drive out devils. Gaudencia was one of these and to her he also gave the power to baptize. Then he designated those who knew how to read to become priests and he ordained them according to the same ritual used in the Catholic Church but with the words which the Holy Spirit inspired and he gave to each his tunic. As the Church grew, he named bishops and a cardinal to administer different regions.

His first headquarters was on a steep hill in the region of Suna, and his faithful relate that he fell three times climbing it and was covered with blood and sweat like Christ. That is why the hill was called Calvary. A church was built there at the same time as a house for Simeo and one for an old woman who represented the Blessed Virgin. A large number of Simeo's disciples lived at the foot of the hill. But one day the government of Kenya had their village burned by the police because they refused to allow themselves to be vaccinated against smallpox.<sup>7</sup>

Celimena and her companion brought Simeo back with them in January, 1963. On arriving, they first went to pray in the local Catholic chapel, then they went to Celimena's house, where Simeo began to tell about his visions. The next day, Simeo and his disciples took themselves in a group to the chapel and demanded to be allowed to pray in their own way with the Catholics. The missionary drove them away. Simeo then went to Kowak, where he was received by the members of the Legion of Mary, and, after having appointed Girpas Wayoga bishop of the district, he left for Kenya.

The story of Simeo and his visions brings out some of the



themes that are characteristic of the Legio and the majority of African churches of the Legio type: criticism of the missionaries for taking money for distributing the sacraments and exercising their ministry; criticism of the administration for freely using the police to establish order without looking into the problems of the people—such as relations between Africans and Westerners and between different ethnic groups, and political, economic, and cultural tensions.

Some interesting details in Simeo's account are worth pointing out. The murder by magic with Simeo as the victim, for example, brings together all the traditional elements: the dead animal, the egg buried at the crossing, the symptoms of bad magic which affect him. The symbols of life and death are also borrowed from local culture: saliva, blood, milk, eggs, rain inside the house, etc. Others, on the contrary, are clearly of biblical origin, especially the signs in the sky.

Paradise, for him clearly evoked modern ideas. His description recalls point for point the administrative buildings of Kisii or Kisumu with the traditionally British well-cut lawn,<sup>8</sup> a barbed-wire enclosure dividing rich and poor, powerful and humble, or, in another way, free men and prisoners, the latter being this time locked out instead of in.<sup>9</sup>

The signs of joy and abundance show the principal preoccupations of the mass of the faithful who envy Western wealth: good food, modern means of transportation, and mansions of different degrees, all suggest the results of civilization and sum up the desire of poor peasants who depend on the rain for their harvest, who travel on foot, and build their houses of mud.

Hell is described in a much briefer and more conventional manner, without any reference to local culture regarding the kind of punishment inflicted on the wicked. The notion of punishment after death is an idea introduced by the missionaries. According to traditional beliefs, punishment follows on action and more often affects an innocent victim than the criminal, although the nature of the evil which strikes the victim together with his relationship to the author of the crime usually reveal the identity of the latter. The

classic image of the flames in which the damned burn is therefore adopted without modification, as the local culture has no equivalent to offer. In heaven the order of the world is reversed, punishments and rewards are distributed according to the merits of each. That is, the oppressors, black or white, administrators and indigenous chiefs, police and functionaries, colonials and missionaries, all those who have made the Africans "suffer" are in hell. Otherwise, the crimes of the wicked continue, as in traditional society, to fall on the innocent victims of this world. But as society has not the power to punish the wicked here below, justice will be re-established in the other world. The distinction between the different religions is more subtle, and the position given to Islam is particularly interesting. Moslems are in fact few in this region of East Africa, and it is not possible to attribute to them any kind of group behavior. On the contrary, the Anglicans, powerful rivals of the Catholics in Nyanza, are placed close to damnation.

The vision of the Last Judgment completed Simeo's prophecy. The sufferings of this world are not useless and they will have an end. "Happy are those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they will be satisfied." God will come soon to re-establish his law on earth for the good of those who have been faithful in their trials, and for the eternal punishment of the mighty in this world who have abused their power. For the faithful of the Legio Maria the world takes on new meaning: their daily individual struggle is part of the cosmic combat between God and the powers of evil, and finds its conclusion in the triumph of the just at the Last Judgment.

*The Doctrine of other Churches of the Legio Type.* The message of Simeo is particularly rich and includes all aspects of the malaise of Luo society. The other prophet-founders of the churches of the Legio type propose fragmentary and less clear versions of the same conception of the world.

The founder of the Nomyia Church, Johanes Oalo, first a

Catholic then an Anglican, was taken up to heaven by angels.<sup>10</sup> He went up to the third heaven where he saw many marvels which he could not reveal and was present at great feasts at which the elect prayed and sang and beef meat was abundant at all banquets. He continued on his way and finally found himself before Jesus and God. Jesus was seated on a throne higher than God and Johanes knelt before him but Jesus told him that God alone was to be adored, as he himself is only a saint. He led him before God, knelt with him, and they prayed to God together. God then confided to Johanes the mission of founding a religion just for the Luo and of circumcising all the boys so that the Luo might be a new chosen people like the Jews. In fact, two races were being admitted into the kingdom of heaven: the Jews, because they have Jesus; and the Arabs, because they have Mohammed. God wanted to admit the Luo too but they had no prophet. That is why he had Johanes come. He told him, "Go, take a well-sharpened knife (to circumcise the boys) and lead the whole Luo people to heaven through the power of this new religion."

After this conversation with God, Johanes asked the Angel Gabriel where was the pope. The angel seemed surprised and asked who the pope was. Johanes answered that he was referring to their religious head. The angel then said that the pope was banished from the kingdom of heaven because he allowed the faithful to adore images of Jesus and Mary. Johanes then asked where Mary was and the angel showed her to him in the midst of the other women. God then commanded Johanes to return to earth and to adore him alone. On returning to earth, Johanes explained to his faithful that he had been given a long cord, the other end of which Jesus held in heaven. Nevertheless, Jesus, said Johanes, is a man like Abraham and Moses, and the Holy Spirit comes from God, not from Jesus. That is why prayers must be addressed only to God and the faithful must be baptized in his name alone.

The parallel between Johanes and Jesus is clear, although

Jesus is only a prophet. Johanes is not considered by his faithful as a martyr, in spite of the prophecy he made to them about his own death, "I am like Jesus and I will not live a long time." Tradition has it that he preached the new religion for three years (like Jesus) and died suddenly without apparent cause, seated on a chair in his own house. His death, therefore, seemed due to divine intervention and not brought about by the forces of evil. His faithful think that he was called to heaven to be their security. He is honored as a great saint, a prophet who received his mission directly from God, but not as a martyr or a divine person.

In the Roho Church we find two men, Alfayo Odongo and Lawi, whose characteristics recall Simeo and Johanes.<sup>11</sup> One day the two men fell into a faint and received the Holy Spirit, who was manifested in them by the gift of tongues. Taught by divine grace, they began to preach, without, however, leaving the Anglican Church, in which Odongo later became a pastor. They made many prophecies during their career. They announced that after their death the Holy Spirit would come to reveal to their faithful the language of heaven. They also declared that they would be assassinated by Africans, their own race, and this would prove their mission to be really divinely inspired; on the contrary, if Europeans were responsible for their deaths, people should abandon the new religion and return to the Anglican tradition. Their prophecy was fulfilled when the two men were killed by a group of Anglican Luo. For their faithful they were, like Simeo, prophets chosen by God to lead them to salvation and martyrs for their faith. But they have never been compared to Jesus, who remains the source of salvation.

The founder of the Israel Church reports a comparable experience. Paul David Zakayo Kivuli studied at the Pentecostal mission of Nyang'ori, where he was baptized in 1925. In 1932 he fell ill and, following this illness, was converted. H. Welbourn has acquired an account of this conversion from oral tradition.

Late in 1931 I had trouble with my liver and, at the end of six months, I heard as though somebody were grinding my

stomach. As a result I vomited bitter water. Then I became a bit better. On 6 February 1932 I became convinced for the first time that I was a sinner. I needed salvation. On 12 February I received the Spirit. As I was singing in my house something lifted me up and threw me on the ground. Everything became dark and I was temporarily blind (Acts ix. 4-9). That night I began to speak with tongues like the apostles of the New Testament; the whole house was filled with light; for the next seventeen days I was blind; and I heard a voice like that of thunder. For twelve days I could eat nothing; and during this period God commanded me not to shave my beard and to take the name of Paul. Then I stayed in my house, praying night and day.

When I recovered I had lost interest in teaching children. I wanted to preach the Word of God. So I began going from village to village, singing and converting people. The power of God filled me. I began praying for the sick; and they were healed. I also prayed for barren women and they got children. People began to come to my house so that I might pray for them. Usually, they would come on Thursday evenings; and I prayed with them till morning when we held big meetings. The Kellers supported me; but many members of the Pentecostal church disliked me because I urged them to confess their sins. They wouldn't let me preach in their churches. Things continued this way till 1941.<sup>12</sup>

Another account of Kivuli confirms the supernatural origin of his mission.

On this hill is a very big stone. There is no water; and it is very dry indeed. While we were singing and praying, water came from the stone. Many people were surprised; and so was I. But, as I looked at the stone and prayed, I realized what God wanted me to do (Revelation ii. 17). When I returned home many people came to see me and hear what happened. My followers and I went to the hill the next day and, while we were praying, water came from the same stone. I gave the water to my people and they drank. This happened four times; and many people began to follow me. In the following year I received another command from God; that I and my followers were not to cut our hair. From this time God gave me power; and, whenever I prayed or preached, everyone turned to follow me.<sup>13</sup>

Kivuli takes up the same theme in another statement: "God had chosen me to preach his Word. It was I who decided to found my own church because others didn't want me. The Pentecostal elders were jealous of my

power; and they tried to prevent others from listening to me. God chose me to preach his Word. I was also chosen to preach the Gospel everywhere and to all men." <sup>14</sup>

The idea that Kivuli was either the Messiah sent for Africans or was going to father an African Messiah circulated for some time among his followers. He himself has never considered himself other than as a prophet. In reality, Kivuli plays in his church a role comparable to that of Moses for the Hebrew people. While the other founders of churches of the Legio type have had a short and often tragic career, full of ups and downs, Kivuli has remained without reverses at the head of his movement since its foundation. Welbourn writes, "Through him the church began; in and through him the church continues. He is the Church." <sup>15</sup> The doctrine of the Church is essentially founded on his word, continually reformulated and made more precise under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and consists chiefly in the organization of the religious, social, and material life of the faithful.

*The Message of the Prophets.* Through accounts given by the prophets of their visions and their contacts with the supernatural world, we perceive the character of their mission and their message.

The first important element is the role of the prophet in relation to the movement of which he is the founder. The prophet is chosen by God to be the interpreter of his will for men and their guide on the way to salvation. Before being communicated to the whole of humanity, the call of the prophet and the promise of salvation is most often first addressed to a particular group—the Africans, the Luo, the poor, and the oppressed. The prophet himself is a member of this group and is an intermediary between God and his people. Through him the group is made equal to other races, to ethnic and social groups dominant in the material world. The people of the prophet become a chosen people, like the Jews, like the Europeans, like the Arabs, because from now on they also possess in him a direct line with heaven. The prophet incarnates the people and through him the people participate in the revelation of which he is the instrument.

The relation of prophet and people on one side and of prophet and God on the other is therefore an essential aspect of his message. The churches do not all reach a conclusion as to whether or not their prophet is a Messiah, a divine person, but what matters is the divine character of the message, the revelation which continues throughout the career of the prophet and of his church through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. When fervor diminishes in a movement, the Spirit is manifested more and more rarely, and the church stagnates. Direct communication with God is the source of its dynamism.

Another important point is the prophet's conception of the world, his mythology. In the work of Welbourn and Ogot already quoted, the subject of mythology is clearly analyzed. According to the authors, the order of the world perceived by a given culture is expressed at one and the same time in rational and in mythological—nonrational—terms, which complete one another and must be in harmony for the group to function according to an inner norm. In Luo society, Western influence has ruptured the harmony between myth and the material order. Colonizer and missionary have upset social, political, and economic relationships, which can no longer be interpreted and organized by the traditional myth. Most of the African churches, particularly those of the Legio type, are looking for an order that will bring harmony to their society in process of transformation. The order they seek is based first on the mythological plane and only then on the level of rational reconstruction. The first three churches—the Legio, the Nomyia, and the Roho—clearly show a tendency to put myth before rational experience. On the contrary, the Israel Church works towards a two-fold reorganization, giving equal footing to the mythological with the revelations of the founders, and to the rational by making its own the government's policy of development.

The new myth proposed by the African churches is essentially of Christian inspiration. Associated from the start with Western civilization, Christianity seemed like a mythological explanation of the power of whites. A close rela-

tionship likewise exists between the notions of salvation and progress as representing two aspects of linear evolution. Nevertheless, the contrast between Christianity as preached by the missionaries and the attitude of Europeans towards Africans was plain and troubling. Then again, the religion proposed by the missionary churches presupposed a rupture, or at the very least, a dissociation, between the religious life of the faithful and their daily life.

Under its Westernized form, the Christian myth was therefore unsuited for an entire reorganization of a world vision. The African churches have done original work in this area by reconciling traditional conceptions with the Christian vision and what remains of precolonial social organization with the necessities of modern evolution. As an example, we shall study one of the fundamental themes of the African churches—the struggle between good and evil. ✓

For the Luo, evil was external to the individual and properly social. "Evil was departure, whether voluntary or involuntary, from the social norm."<sup>16</sup> In the African churches, evil is conceived in the same fashion; only the definition of the reference group changes. As will be shown when speaking of the organization of the churches, the local community can be compared to the lineage, while the church appears like a clan to which Welbourn and Ogot give the name "Christ-tribe."<sup>17</sup> As in traditional society, evil is everything that contravenes the norm of the group—the community-lineage or the church-clan—everything that disagrees with it, everything that can injure the group itself. In the Legio, an injudicious stranger is possessed and must be kept apart like someone with the plague. By contrast, the good is everything that conforms to the group, everything that profits it, is sympathetic to it. In contrast to evil, which is conceived largely in traditional terms, the notion of good in the African churches has brought new elements into play. Good is personified by the Holy Spirit and his interpreter, the prophet, two personages without any equivalent in tradition. In the same way, good does not appear as a state of preservation of life or of restoration to life but as an



evolution which culminates in a definitive triumph over the forces of death.

Evil can include different elements. For example, the churches put in the class of bad things the vestiges of traditional society which prevent individuals from participating freely in modern evolution and in tasting its fruits: sorcery, which penalizes individual success; the cult of ancestors, which places the young under the tutelage of the elders. They also place in the same category the forces of modern oppression that hamper individual and collective liberty: the police, the administration, the indigenous chiefs imposed by the colonial power, the missionaries. Evil also includes all that threatens the internal cohesion of the group, all that endangers the control and authority of the leaders, all that entails a break with the norm. Prohibitions and group identification marks are directly tied to this conception.

What has been said relates to the struggle between good and evil on the group level. In regard to the individual, traditional notions often continue to preponderate: evil manifests itself chiefly through sorcery and possession, which have their sources in jealousy and hatred; the good manifests itself in the fecundity of land, cattle, and women and in respect for social and religious obligations. The bonds between these two ways of viewing things is established by the local community: when the individual cannot manage to restore an equilibrium between the forces of good and the forces of evil by traditional means, when the myth transmitted by the ancestors no longer suffices to account for the transformations in the social framework, he turns to a new reference group which offers a redefinition of good and evil and appropriate means of action.

Studying the struggle between good and evil brings us to the problem of the finality of the world. As in the original Christian myth, the issue of the struggle is predetermined at the cosmic level, and by extension, the triumph of good is anticipated on the everyday plane. The fundamental difference between the traditional and Christian myths has to do

with the matter of finality. Instead of a cyclic progression, a periodic restoration of the equilibrium between the forces of life and death, the African churches, like the missionary churches, hold out to their faithful a linear conception of evolution. Instead of an internal finality, creation carrying within itself the seeds of its own flowering, they propose an external finality with God as its end.

Man is no longer alone in the struggle, and the triumph of good is inevitable. The efforts of the powers of evil most often turn to the advantage of the good: the murder of Simeo is the prelude to his vision and resurrection; that of Odongo and Lawi serves as proof of their divine inspiration. God intervenes even directly in favor of his faithful in order to encourage them to persevere in the faith and to help them convince those who refuse to believe. Miracles form part of the everyday life of the prophets and their disciples, and the repeated victories of the African churches over different forms of evil by exorcism, prayer for the sick, and collective resistance to the persecutions of the missionaries and the administration prefigure the final triumph of the elect. The world is animated and divided by supernatural powers as in the traditional myth but a new element is introduced, a finality which impels the struggle towards its inevitable conclusion, the victory of God over Satan.

At the same time that the African churches propose a vision of the world to their faithful, they hold out to them a way of salvation, a combined whole of rules, prohibitions, and means of action which assures them protection from and victory over evil in this world and a place among the elect at the Last Judgment. The way of salvation is given only in broad lines in the revelation received by the prophet. Afterwards, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the prophet and his disciples elaborate in detail the law of the church.<sup>18</sup>

Each church requires of the faithful some participation in the liturgical life of the community. Weekly worship takes place on Saturday or Sunday, depending on the movement. In the Israel Church, Friday is the day for public confession

in memory of the crucifixion of Jesus, while Sunday commemorates his resurrection. The choice of Saturday as the day for worship is sometimes a reaction against the missionary church from which the founder separated, sometimes a reference to the customs of the Jews, the prototype of the chosen people.

Outside of the obligation of praying in common, the African churches impose on their faithful certain forms of protection and struggle against evil. In all churches of the Legio type, and even of the Johera type, prayers for the sick and exorcism are generally practiced, in accord with the New Testament, which offers numerous examples of both. The origin of prohibitions about food are found in the Bible and in traditional customs too. Meat of strangled animals, blood, and fish without scales are forbidden by the Bible; some kinds of green vegetables, of fish, the flesh of certain animals traditionally consecrated to spirits who possess human beings, are food judged impure and dangerous in the local culture. Other prohibitions are borrowed from certain missionary churches like the Mennonites, the Seventh Day Adventists, and the Pentecostals: dancing, using tobacco, and drinking alcohol constitute major sins in the majority of African churches. Certain customs, such as removing shoes before entering a church, have been borrowed from Islam.

In spite of numerous variants, the way of salvation always rests on a few fundamental principles. In the first place, salvation is not individual but collective. As M. I. Pereira de Queiroz shows: "The messianic promise, like the promised millenium, is not addressed to individuals but to collectives; initiates are not saved individually by the Messiah; this privilege will be accorded to the collectivity of the faithful. The salvation brought by the Messiah is addressed to the whole group of the elect; the perfection of the individual can be sought only in the group; the end of perfection is to help in the redemption of the whole. Each is bound to all and all are bound to each."<sup>19</sup> It is by becoming a member of the community of the elect, the people of God, that the sinner can be saved. The elect recognize one another by their

customs and their costumes. They preserve their purity by observing the commandments of the church.

The second characteristic of the way of salvation is the manner in which one enters it. Most of the African churches propose two stages: public or private confession followed by baptism, even if the new convert has already been baptized in another denomination. By confession, the candidate for salvation rejects "the world," Satan, and his works; by baptism, he enters into the community of the elect. In both aspects of conversion, the community plays an essential role. He who enters it is saved, he who separates himself from it is left without defense against the powers of evil. Writing about the Congolese "restorers of confidence," Georges Balandier says: "The followings they attracted—and, from the start, public confession was a condition of membership—made it possible to restore order, to establish a rough and ready distinction between 'good' people and 'bad,' between 'those who heard the call' and those who had not. This summary dichotomy seemed to be a way of dealing with a confused and dangerous state of affairs. It localized the ills from which society appeared to be suffering. It is matched by the dichotomy between oppressors and oppressed, 'orphan children' and those who wield material power, the chosen and the damned, etc."<sup>20</sup> Lastly, the true sign of salvation is the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the people of election are recognized by the gifts he accords them, either through individuals chosen as intermediaries or at random as first one and then another are inspired. In the Legio and the Roho and Israel churches, the gift of tongues and ecstasy are usual and appreciated gifts, essential to the life of the movement. Such phenomena can affect all the faithful and be produced regularly in every collective manifestation. In the Nomyia Church, on the contrary, these gifts are not accessible to the faithful and, because of this, the dynamism of the movement suffers.

It should be noted, however, that the Israel Church is different from the others in regard to its attitude toward "the world." On the one hand, in fact, it recommends to its

faithful to protect themselves against defilement and evil forces and has them wear distinctive means of identification as the other churches of the Legio type do. But on the other hand, instead of turning away completely from the worldly sphere, it tries to adopt its positive elements. As a result, it reaches a different public. While the others address themselves to the great mass of the illiterate and the disinherited, to whom the modern world offers only frustrations and insoluble problems, the Israel Church recruits its adherents from among craftsmen, prosperous peasants, and tradesmen, who are aware of the limits of their social and economic situation but benefit enough from modern evolution to be able to envisage possibilities of social advancement for themselves or for their children.<sup>21</sup> Its public being smaller, more restricted, the number of its adherents is also smaller: about five thousand members after thirty years of existence, while the Legio recruited more than sixty thousand in a few months.

Thus in the social and moral chaos of the modern world, the prophets of churches of the Legio type bring order and light: a better understanding of the forces which govern human existence, some means of protection and action against evil influences, and the hope that justice will be done in heaven. The prophet is a revolutionary who calls on his faithful to take their place on God's side in the warfare between good and evil. Instead of accepting the world as it is, he redefines it and proposes a way of reversing the established order. However, as J. Seguy emphasizes, "What is essential is not found in the golden age and the reversal of profane values which it implies, but in the prophetic vision. The transformations which these beliefs unfailingly undergo proves this."<sup>22</sup>

*Doctrine in Churches of the Johera Type.* The message of the prophet-founders of the churches of the Legio type has been treated at some length. The material concerning churches of the Johera type is much less rich.

First of all, the message of the founder is of an altogether different kind. He himself is not a prophet, he has received

no direct revelation from God, no redemptive mission to his people, no supernatural powers. His initiative is based on a constructive criticism of the religious situation on the local or national level, depending on his own origin and the level of education he has received. The founder does not propose a revolution of universal import but an African form of Christianity, an adaptation of the principles of the gospel to local conditions. Among churches of the Johera type, some have aims which go far beyond the framework of the province. The Johera Church clearly presents itself as a national church, just as two of the Legio type do—the Israel Church and the Legio itself. Practically, however, for ethnic and language reasons, their influence remains local. And, as Welbourn and Ogot point out, it is precisely their local character that gives them their strength.

Originally, these churches developed like those of the Legio type: a Revival movement formed within a mother church which the founder and his followers left after a time to found a new group more in tune with their aspirations and religious ideas. The Revival did not originate with a revelation or from a revolutionary idea, but from a desire for reform, a reform dealing essentially with two areas: the Africanization of structures and of customs. Africanizing structures is a problem which presents itself chiefly in churches with a centralized government, like the Catholic and Anglican churches. It chiefly preoccupies a certain elite formed by the missionary churches. The Johera Church came into being above all because of a conflict between the African clergy and the European hierarchy over the control of local affairs.

The Africanizing of customs, on the contrary, touches all Christians, particularly those who live in a milieu that remains steeped in tradition. The reaction of the African churches against the Westernized version of Christianity presented by the missionary churches is expressed chiefly in regard to polygamy and liturgy.

Their attitude concerning polygamy has the imprint of tolerance: Jesus came to save all men and so baptism cannot be refused to someone who was polygamous before his

conversion. Once converted, however, Christians ought to respect the law of the gospel and not enter into a polygamous marriage. In some churches of the Johera type, a polygamous marriage can be cause for expulsion and, in every case, the offender is considered as a man who attaches more importance to worldly than to heavenly affairs. If he is not excluded from church, he suffers a loss of prestige, "his name is lowered," and he cannot fill any position in the hierarchy of the movement, not even that of local lay leader; nor does he have the right to impose hands on the sick. On the whole then, polygamy is tolerated and cannot be made an obstacle to salvation but monogamy is the ideal, embodied in the religious leaders.

The Africanization of the liturgy is a problem at least as important and the African churches have likewise done original work in this area. As will be seen in the chapter devoted to religious activities, they have borrowed certain modes of expression from the local culture—melody, dance, possession. Instead of the prayer books of the missionary churches, they have substituted forms of spontaneous expression, often drawing inspiration from Bible reading or from their own culture. Rituals which have fallen into disuse in the missionary churches, such as prayer for the sick and exorcism, are part of popular practice in the African movements.

In churches of the Johera type, the expressed doctrine is relatively poor. While the movements of the Legio type hold out to their faithful a renewed vision of the world, the Johera, on the contrary, reduce their message to the essentials: some notions of biblical history, the ten commandments, salvation by the blood of Jesus, faith in the Holy Spirit, who constantly inspires his church and each individual Christian, sin under the three stereotyped forms—dancing, tobacco, and alcohol. For the rest, they rely on the wealth of tradition and of the diffused doctrine. Their message, reduced to a minimum, expressed in terms accessible to the local culture, can be adapted to any context, and great liberty of interpretation is left to each group according to its own situation.

The way of salvation offered by these churches is likewise much less precise than that of the Legio type churches. It includes the fundamental elements emphasized earlier: faith in salvation through Jesus Christ, confession, baptism, and submission to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But by contrast the faithful do not wear special costumes intended to mark them as belonging to the group, and prohibitions concern only the three fundamental sins already noted. In the African Catholic Legion, which seeks to resemble the Roman Catholic Church in every way, there are no prohibitions. The contrast between churches of the Legio type and those of the Johera regarding prohibitions stems from the fact that the former identify themselves with the Jewish people, the model of chosen people, and closely copy their revelation and customs from Israel's. The latter are especially concerned with adapting the Christian message to local conditions: they present their way of salvation as an African version of Christianity, and not as a way that excludes all others.

Another aspect of the doctrine of the Johera type of churches is their attitude towards the world. There is no question of rejecting it as a whole but of choosing the positive things it has to offer and using them for good and for progress. There are no prohibitions concerning money, trade, Western medicine, the economic advancement of the individual, education. Quite to the contrary, the faithful of these churches often seem to be among the most progressive elements of the district. Their houses are roomy and well made; their fields are cultivated with care, their wives well dressed and good housekeepers, their manners open and their hospitality generous. They have no hostility towards the government or the missionary churches. On the other hand, these churches are just as opposed as the Legio type to traditional beliefs and altogether reject the cult of ancestors, the techniques of healing by magicians and herbalists, divination, and possession by lower spirits.

Lastly, in contrast to movements of the Legio type, the founder plays a relatively secondary role in the life of a



Johera type of church. While Simeo and Kivuli seem to be unifying factors essential to their movements and their disappearance would risk bringing on cleavages between rival factions, the personality of the founder, simply as a founder, matters little in churches of the Johera type and local communities multiply of themselves in a way largely independent of any centralized control or any impetus from the summit. Leaders fill a different role; there being no continual revelation transmitted by the prophets to their faithful, founders of these churches do the work of organizers and establish a regular flow of information between the local groups and the central organs. The important point is that the value of the message does not depend in this case on the person of the founder and his particular gifts, nor on the special relation between the church and God through his mediation.

### *Doctrine and Community*

Founders, preachers, and Western missionaries do not speak in a void. They address individuals, members of a culture and a society, who have a certain conception of the world and of existence, more or less rich, more or less clear, but sufficient to give meaning to their daily life. When the myth is found to be inadequate to meet the modern situation, men look for another explanation, another system of interpretation. But the old system remains deeply anchored in their minds and serves as a basis for all further evolution, just as the experiences of a child form his judgments as an adult.

*The Formation of Diffused Doctrine.* I am giving the name of diffused doctrine to the synthesis which takes place in minds between the traditional vision and the Christian vision of the world. A common patrimony of beliefs is added to and sometimes contradicted but continues to serve as a source for a global interpretation of the universe. Each one draws on it according to his needs and capacities and introduces his own note of originality.

Formerly the world was conceived of as a field of action for multiple forces—God, the ancestors, different nonhuman spirits, sorcerers, magicians. The origin of man and of life, the renewal of the seasons, and all the social and economic aspects of existence had a mythological explanation. The material and supernatural worlds penetrated one another, reacted on each other.

Missionary teaching did not do away with these beliefs but was superimposed on them. Instead of Christianizing the vision of the world, the missionaries tried to replace the traditional myth by a Westernized version of the Christian myth. But the more they denied the existence and influence of spirits and sorcerers, the more they condemned rites of propitiation and magical practices which served as protection against evil spells, the more deeply they rooted fear in the minds of the Luo, who felt themselves disarmed before all too real enemies. Because the myth offered by the Western churches offered no alternative to traditional beliefs, the latter have persisted side by side with it in an unstable and unsatisfying equilibrium.

For a small number of Luo who have received a good education in a missionary setup, traditional beliefs have been schematized to the point of becoming a simple element in the whole drama of redemption. With the Christian myth, they have adopted Western norms and values and have taken their place in a material order in which the notion of progress is held to correspond with the idea of salvation in the spiritual order.

Most often the situation is just the opposite with large masses of the people who have no education. Instead of earlier beliefs finding their place in the Christian myth as a stage, now surpassed, of the spiritual evolution of society, they have simply been added to and reinforced. Christian symbols become instruments of power added to traditional means of assuring protection and superiority for the individual or the group. Becoming baptized is a means of acquiring a new name added to a person's birth names and confers on its possessor a status above that of a "pagan." The missionary

churches are sources of wealth and power and it is good to conciliate and dangerous to oppose them. This attitude characterizes a good number of Christians and even of people who have not been baptized, live immersed in the customary milieu, and whose religious knowledge, acquired during a period in a catechumenate or by hearsay, remains very superficial. It also characterizes most of the members of the African churches, in particular those of the Legio type, at least in the first phase of their contact with the Christian myth.

Halfway between these two attitudes is an important group of Christians baptized in the missionary churches, who have been deeply imbued by Christianity but remain immersed in the traditional milieu. On every occasion they find themselves confronted by two contradictory but equally constraining interpretations and options. What is "good" according to custom—for example, taking a second wife or marrying a brother's widow—is "bad" according to the missionary churches, and vice versa. As a result, a permanent feeling of guilt and insecurity supervenes which endangers the stability of the individual and society.

In these three cases, in different degrees, a certain amount of Christianity penetrates minds but does not do away with old beliefs and so becomes mixed with them. There takes place not conversion but a Christianization of the atmosphere to the extent that mission teaching reaches a great number of children and adults, and congregations multiply.

David Barrett makes this Christianization one of the determining factors of separatism, the date of the publication of the Old and New Testaments serving him as a criterion for evaluating the transformations undergone. He writes: "The impact of the biblical view-point, expressed with all the persuasive power of the vernacular, profoundly changes patterns of thought from mythical to historical, and world-view from pagan to Christian. Not until the Bible has appeared, therefore, do reaction movements embody biblical features. Not until the atmosphere becomes christianized do the reactions take a christianized form." <sup>23</sup>

The diffused doctrine is formed by the confluence of Christian and traditional currents, depending on a person's age, level of education, and the milieu in which his daily existence unfolds. It plays a particularly important role in the African churches. They see in it the real basis for Christian education. Those in responsible positions in the local communities, when asked about the way in which catechumens are prepared for baptism, answer unanimously that the doctrine is learned while participating in the activities of the community. Given the meager material of the sermons and the fact that most of the faithful cannot read or write, the minimal knowledge they possess comes to them from diffused doctrine, spelled out, enriched, and organized in the framework of the community. The existence of a common fund of beliefs makes it possible for all to understand the message of the founder or prophet and the preaching of those in charge of the local community. The apparent doctrinal poverty of the African churches is more understandable if one presupposes that their members have a knowledge of fundamental mythological elements. Only a few specialists are called to a clearer, more reasoned notion of their faith. The mass of the faithful are content to steep themselves in a "mythological climate" in which both traditional and Christian visions are grounded.

*The Transformations of Diffused Doctrine.* The diffused doctrine, under the different aspects just described, is part of the contextual data in the rise of the African churches. In the free state, it is unformulated and imprecise and can only be apprehended by observing people's behavior. The founder of an African church is the first to bring some order into the confusion and to organize multiple and contradictory beliefs around a central idea. Georges Balandier speaks of "a serious attempt at rationalization done by the founders."<sup>24</sup>

From the time the founder begins his preaching and a little community of disciples forms around him, under the influences of their different personalities—in spite of the kinship of mind uniting them—the expressed doctrine under-

goes a first transformation. Beginning with this group, the founder's message spreads out through the population and it is important to understand how the message is received at the level of the local community. In fact the doctrine expressed by the founder is not assimilated as such by the faithful: it acts as a catalyzer on the diffused doctrine, which then emerges in the consciousness of individuals and the group. This evolution takes place in several stages.

At first, a cell of listeners gathers around a preacher. The central idea of the message awakens the same echo within them, arouses a like emotional response, evokes similar behavior. Two phenomena then occur: on one hand, the vague and contradictory notions proposed by the diffused doctrine around the main theme being preached become objects of knowledge and are organized more clearly in the minds of the faithful; on the other hand, a communion is established between different individuals who pass through the same experience together, beginning at the same level of the diffused doctrine and reaching the same formulation of their beliefs. The community takes shape from the feeling of identity developed among men and women who share the same vision of the world and discover themselves in the founder's message as it is transmitted to them.

The group so formed is first only an aggregate bound together simply by a common vision of the universe and its finality. But if the message really touches a sensitive chord in the listener, it will affect his behavior. It will become possible to decide upon a minimum of common activities—meetings to hear and discuss preaching, meetings for prayer. Little by little the aggregate is transformed into a community when personal relationships marked by a certain degree of permanence are established among the faithful. The objective of the community is not to make it possible for individuals to secure advantages for themselves but for each to share what he has in common with the others and what has meaning only within the community—a vision of the world, hope for salvation.

The formation of community is accompanied by the

elaboration of a minimum of common doctrine, a "credo." Beginning with the diffused doctrine and under the influence of the initial message, the community defines its basics and its personality. The foundation of Legio communities in Tanzania after Simeo's visit offers a good example of this process. Simeo first came to the parish of Tatwe at Siruka, to the home of Celimena. There he recounted his visions and preached the new faith to a small group of the Legion of Mary and their Catholic neighbors. After he left, the little group continued to meet and began to go through the neighborhood praying for the sick. In time, continual meetings gave way to a certain regularity, a place of worship was chosen and a chapel built. Disciples who lived too far away to come regularly began to pray at home and attracted neighbors and relatives. In the parish of Tatwe, a community formed around Girpas Wayoga, the bishop at Rabuor; at Luanda another formed around Bernardus Akech, a lay leader; and still another at Nyabirongo, with a resident priest. Each of these groups gather together all the people of the neighborhood who share the same vision of the world and experience the same fears and hopes to which Simeo's preaching—transmitted by word of mouth—has given concrete existence and social embodiment.

Once constituted, the community differentiates. Some of the faithful dedicate all of their time to religious activities and leave their families in order to make their home at the place of worship, living on the almsgiving of others. (This is the reason why Simeo has been accused of drawing women away from their husbands and snatching them from their children.) Other categories of the faithful specialize in discovering and contending against evil. Others participate actively in the life of the collectivity while continuing to carry on their family duties. Others still content themselves with attending weekly worship. During this time, through contacts among the faithful, discussions, Scripture reading, clashes with those around them, and visits of preachers from Kenya, the community becomes conscious of itself, its objectives, its internal and external relationships. Asked

about their faith, the faithful answer in the same terms, insisting on similar themes, assimilated by repetition in songs, sermons, parables, and stereotyped dialogues between the congregation and the leader of the ceremony.

"How many gods are there?" asks the preacher.

"There is only one God," answers the whole congregation with one voice.

"Is Jesus good?"

"Yes, Jesus is good."

In this way a "credo" is formed, a doctrinal minimum recognized and accepted by all the members of a given group. In the same church palpable differences can be noticed from one community to another: for example, in the Legio the communities in the Tatwe region preach complete rejection of the world, while those around Kowak have a much more open attitude in regard to their surroundings.

The first effect of the encounter between the expressed doctrine—that is, essentially, the founder's message—and the diffused doctrine is the creation of the local community. Inversely, the local community, in the course of its formation, acts on the diffused doctrine by leading its members to reach a conscious "credo." Finally, the community, once it is formed, becomes for the faithful an instrument for relationships with society in general, at one and the same time a reference point and a center for exchange between the traditional and modern worlds.

As a reference point, the community makes it possible for its members to orient themselves in the universe. It is a source of values and meanings, founded on the dichotomy between "saints" and "sinners." It becomes the measuring rod by which the faithful judge their surroundings: structures—internal and external—objectives, and relationships are lifted to the level of myth. Thus, starting with the central idea of salvation, the faithful unite to form the people of God, and the local community, the concrete image of the church, is incorporated into the community of the elect.

The faithful find their place and role in the world as members of the community. The world is conceived of as a

battleground between opposing forces, and by making salvation the stake in the struggle between good and evil, the community introduces its members into the center of the conflict, at once as actors, victims, and victors. Further, in giving a religious dimension to the problems of society, it affords the faithful a frame of reference for understanding them and techniques for protecting themselves against their severest blows. The community gives the faithful as well the feeling of participating actively in the solution of problems on both the local and cosmic planes. The closer religious life is tied to everyday life, the more evident is the role of the community; and the African churches with the greatest number of collective activities are also those that insist most on the necessity of belonging to the community in order to be saved—for example, the Legio and the Israel, Roho, and Fweny Mar Lam churches. But in all the churches, in different degrees, the community is the point of reference around which the spiritual and material universe is organized.

The community is also a means of communication and exchange between the traditional and modern worlds. Its members for the most part are steeped in the customary milieu; their lives unfold in almost the same way as for their ancestors. On the other hand, their leaders are in touch with the higher echelons of the hierarchy and through them with administrative matters, new ideas, the Western world. The community, placed between the two poles of the church, plays the part of a hinge between the two cultures and makes it possible for its members to interpret and assimilate elements coming from without.

An evolution of doctrine is, therefore, observable within the bosom of the community. In a general way, traditional beliefs are progressively schematized and reinterpreted in Christian terms, while Christian ideas take on more and more importance and replace them. The notion of spirit, for example, has undergone such a transformation. According to the old beliefs, three kinds of spirits existed—ancestors, nonhuman spirits, and God. Possession by one of the first two forms could be a source of prestige for someone who



benefited by it, on condition that it be worked out with care and propriety. In its turn, Christian mythology proposed different categories: angels, who are God's messengers and do not seek to possess men; devils who possess men in order to cause evil; and the Holy Spirit, who is the source of all graces for those who receive him. The result is that a blurring of beliefs has taken place and all the secondary spirits of tradition have been assigned to the category of devils.

One of my informants, a member of the Roho Church, stated: "Even our ancestors can torment us and possess us as evil spirits. According to tradition, you had to go to be healed by a magician. But in the Roho Church, Christians make a circle around the sick person and pray until the evil spirit, who can be one of his ancestors, frees him." In the same way, the techniques of traditional healing accomplished by the different arts of the magician, the herbalist, and the diviner have all become attributed to the practice of diabolic powers and rejected for evangelical or Western techniques—healing by prayer, exorcism, and modern medicine.

The community shares in the elaboration of doctrine and orchestrates its evolution, while it depends itself on the harmony of ideas and the identity of faith animating its members. In fact, "... wherever we observe the religious life, we find that it has a definite group as its foundation," Durkheim tells us.<sup>25</sup> The group related to the formation of collective religious thought is the local community, the concrete image of the church at the level of everyday life.

## Notes

1. Joachim Wach, *Types of Religious Experience, Christian and Non-Christian* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 27.

2. Although Moslems are few in Nyanza, migrant workers can have had contact with them in the cities and on the coast. Certain customs of Islam have shown up quite quickly in the African churches, and even in the Catholic Church, where many of the faithful finish the sign of the cross by striking the breast with several quick, light strokes as the Moslems do at the end of their prayer.

3. Bible in hand, a priest of the Nomyia Church invited me to discuss circumcision, and for two hours we exchanged contradictory quotations, which did nothing to shake his conviction that circumcision is necessary for salvation.

4. Several versions contradict one another: some say a day; some say three days, like Jesus; another, five, which would be contrary to the custom of burying the dead after three days.

5. Joseph and Celimena make no reference to Okelo, who would have transferred to Simeo the power of driving out spirits which he had inherited from his ancestors.

6. Today Celimena comments on this sign by saying that God was showing his displeasure with Simeo.

7. This had taken place shortly before my arrival and, as the region of Suna is just the other side of the frontier, the members of the Legio in Tanzania were very uneasy and suspicious of my intentions. Later on, I visited Calvary, where only a few faithful still live, while Simeo has moved his headquarters near Kisumu.

8. Maintained today with the same care by the functionaries of the Kenya government.

9. Kenya prisons are like concentration camps with high fences of barbed wire.

10. This account was given by the priest and the bishop of the Ochuna community and has been completed from descriptions given in the literature.

11. The different communities visited all gave identical versions, doubtless hardened into legend after thirty years.

12. F. B. Welbourn and B. A. Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home* (London: Oxford Press, 1966), p. 77.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 77-78.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

18. These principles are only enumerated here, as they will be studied more in detail in Chapter 6.

19. M. I. Pereira de Queiroz, *Réforme et révolution dans les sociétés traditionnelles* (Paris: Anthropos, 1968) p. 6.

20. Georges Balandier, *The Sociology of Black Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1970), pp. 500-501.

21. Welbourn and Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, Part 4, especially pp. 127-128.

22. J. Seguy, "Sectes chrétiennes et développement," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions* 13 (1962): 13.

23. David Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 215.

24. Georges Balandier, *The Sociology of Black Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 436.

25. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, Macmillan, 1965), p. 59.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# The Organization of the African Churches

"A society whose members are united by the fact that they think in the same way in regard to the sacred world and its relations with the profane world, and by the fact that they translate these common ideas into common practices, is what is called a church," Durkheim tells us.<sup>1</sup> A study of the doctrine has demonstrated for us the importance of the role played by the group in which it is formed. Now, before beginning an analysis of religious practices, a description of the framework in which they develop and which gives them meaning is in order. I shall first show how the hierarchical and economic organization of the church is perceived and describe the position of the local community in the whole. Thereafter a study will be made of the community from the viewpoint of the relationships existing between its members and its role in the life of the faithful.

### *Hierarchical Organization*

On the whole, the African churches have tried to model their organization on the missionary churches which gave them birth. Most of the founders of these movements had exercised some kind of responsibility in the mother church or had received some instruction from it before becoming independent. So they had knowledge and immediate experience of the methods of organization and the functioning of the Western churches and, with the exception of the Warrouk Church—which organized its movement on the model of lay associations—drew on them for inspiration.

Most of the churches studied here began their career as

lay action groups of Revival movements within the mother church; this is the case with the Legio and the Johera Church in particular. Their organization was therefore integrated within the mother church and had no independent existence. They were officially under the authority of priests and pastors at the parish level. Immediately after separation, these movements reorganized with their own hierarchy patterned after that of the mother church, but in spite of their desire to attain a perfect duplication of the original, they exhibit original forms.

The Legio Maria, for example, considers itself as the true Catholic Church and tries to resemble its model as closely as possible by establishing a hierarchy of cardinals, bishops, and priests and territorial divisions into dioceses and parishes. Nevertheless, fundamental differences remain.

Thus the founder, Simeo Ondeto, is not a "pope." According to Joseph Kasia, the priest at Kowak, a part of the faithful recognize the legitimacy of the Pope of Rome, especially since they do not have to deal with his authority and he seems to them the symbol of Catholicity. But Gaudencia says, "We receive the key of heaven from Jesus and not from Rome" and a number of others' thoughts along the same line seem to indicate that opinions are divided on the point. For all sorts, Simeo is a prophet and for some even Christ reincarnate. An intermediary between the Holy Spirit and the hierarchy, he is the spiritual director of the Legio and his voice predominates in matters of law and dogma. But the church can function perfectly without him, as it has already done when he went into hiding to escape the police.

The material direction of the church reverts to the high dignitaries installed in the Legio headquarters at Kisumu. They are the ones who went ahead with getting government registration for the movement and have since tried to have it recognized as a force in national opinion. On the whole, they have been more interested in problems of general policy than in local problems. For this reason, the bishops responsible for the different regions enjoy a high degree of autonomy.

From the beginning of his career, Simeo has personally

named bishops and given them the power of ordaining priests. The bishop himself does not need to be a priest; he can be polygamous, can engage in lucrative pursuits; and the bishop of North Mara, Girpas Wayoga, is a grain dealer. He can make decisions about some problems on the diocesan level, but, because of his distance from headquarters, he lacks influence on the general policy affecting the life of the whole church. He has no more power over the local life of the communities, and his function is largely honorific.

There are priests and lay leaders in charge of local religious life. There are no catechists, for there is no central organ capable of paying them and directing their activities. The priests, ordained at the Kisumu seminary like Joseph Kasia or by the local bishop as in the case of Raphael Tieng'o and Johanes Olong'a of the Siruka community, are sent to communities who ask for them, as in the case of Kasia, or exercise their ministry at their own homes, as the other two do.

If a priest is sent to a community, he must be accepted by the faithful, for he depends on them for his food and money enough to cover necessities. But once established, his power and prestige often surpass the bishop's and even that of the head of the church, and, in case of conflict, his parish will follow him if he decides to separate from the rest of the movement. He needs the approval of his congregation to initiate anything but, if they really support him, he is almost independent as far as the higher echelons of the hierarchy are concerned. This privileged relationship between the priest and his community is even more evident in the case of a priest who exercises his ministry at his own home, for then the community forms around him and right from the start it is he who provides it with life and leadership.

A priest is usually in charge of a parish which includes several communities. He lives near his church where he says Mass daily as well as on Sunday and he takes turns visiting the chapels scattered throughout the neighborhood, just as the Catholic priests visit their out-stations. But communication is difficult and the priest must travel on foot as his

faithful lack the means to provide him with a bicycle. So a service directed by a lay leader often substitutes for Sunday Mass.

The lay leader is not appointed by the hierarchy but chosen by the community. Usually he is a pious and ambitious man who builds the chapel himself or donates the land for its construction near his farm in such a way as to establish his influence in the community. He can be compared to a strong family head who gathers around him his relatives and neighbors. Bernardus Akech of Luanda and Gallus Ochieng' of Kirogo belong to this category. They will be spoken of again apropos community structures.

The organization of the Nomyia Church resembles the Legio's. Many leaders have been its head since its foundation and the death of Johanes Oalo. All have been chosen from among the bishops by an assembly composed of high church dignitaries and delegates of the local communities, gathered at the headquarters of the movement in Kenya; but their authority is far away and has little efficacy on the local level.

In the district of North Mara, the first missionary, founder of the Ochuna community from which the movement developed in that region, was named bishop. When he retired from public affairs, he himself appointed his successor and took the purely honorific title of archbishop. The principal task of the bishop is to ordain priests, that is, to "pray for a man who desires to become a priest when he puts on the white vestment." But priests are not chosen by the bishop, they are elected by their community. Priests and bishops can be polygamous but "It is better, according to the New Testament, for them to have only one wife," declared the priest of Ochuna who, like his bishop, is polygamous. There are two priests in the district, who visit the scattered communities. The role of the priest is to baptize, to conduct prayers for the sick, to encourage the faithful to assist at weekly services. He also prays for the faithful who wish to become lay leaders or catechists and who have been approved by the community.

The Roho Church has only one bishop, who is the

supreme head of the church, and is assisted by high dignitaries from among whom his successor will be chosen when he dies. Priests, four for the major branch of the movement, have been elected by representatives of all the communities and ordained by the bishop. The one in charge of the groups in North Mara lives in Kenya near the head of the church and comes only once a year to Tanzania in order to baptize catechumens. He alone possesses this power.

At the level of the local communities, responsibility rests on the lay leaders. Their role consists in conducting weekly worship and in preparing catechumens for baptism. They can have many wives if they were polygamous before entering the church but they must not take new wives if they wish to hold a post of responsibility. They are assisted in their work by the "*jotelo*," men and women chosen by the congregation to organize the material and social life of the community. Their importance will be treated later. In the Roho Church, even more than in the Legio or the Nomyia Church, the function of the clergy is purely sacramental, and the authority of the local communities is almost absolute. They choose their priests and their lay leaders, support the movement financially, and no authority can be imposed on them without their consent. When the supreme head of the church tried to force a priest of his choice on the Kitembe community instead of ordaining the one they had designated, the group seceded and formed the minor branch of the church.<sup>2</sup>

In the churches of the Johera type, the principle of autonomy is just as fully developed. As in the Anglican Church, the hierarchy of the Johera Church—with Ajouga as its bishop and elected head—includes archdeacons, priests, and lay leaders. The district is placed under the authority of a resident lay leader and divided among seven responsible men at the local level of each community. One of them, Nelson, leader of the Luanda community, had charge of five other scattered groups in the area.

The lay leaders receive formation in a special school in Kenya for a time proportionate to the importance of the responsibilities which they will later assume: two weeks in



the case of Nelson. Priests are formed in a seminary at Kisumu. The one responsible for the district of North Mara comes to administer the sacraments once a year. Occasionally, communities also receive visits from itinerant preachers who have no official rank in the hierarchy but devote some years of their life to preaching and to living on the hospitality and gifts of groups who receive them.

The Pentecostal Church is under the direction of the mission of Nabisawa (Suna, Kenya), headed by a Luo who studied in Canada. The district has two pastors, one in the region of Tatwe, the other in the neighborhood of Shirati. They come to give baptism once a year to communities or groups of communities and catechumens. Nevertheless, in these instances too, local life is under the direction of lay leaders. As in the Johera Church, those who have received formation are placed in charge of several groups, sometimes rather far from one another. William Rabongo, who lived in Tatwe itself, was responsible in addition for a group situated beyond Kowak, which meant that each Sunday he had to make a bicycle trip of more than fifteen miles after holding a service at Tatwe.

The case of the little churches, Fweny Mar Lam and the African Catholic Legion, is somewhat different from the others, for they have their founders and supreme heads living at home and possess no complex hierarchical organization. These two churches aside,<sup>3</sup> a difference is clearly discernible in the African churches according to whether they have been inspired by the Catholic Church or the Anglican Church. This is apparent chiefly on the level of the higher echelons of the hierarchy. Thus the Legio and the Nomyia churches have modeled their organization on the Catholic Church's by dividing different regions into dioceses relatively independent of a central power, since this is how the mother church seemed to them. The Roho and Johera churches, on the contrary, took their inspiration from the Anglican Church, with a single bishop at the head of the whole movement, as the bishop of Mombasa heads the Anglican Church in Kenya; lay leaders are in charge of local affairs, and pastors visit the

communities only at rare intervals, while in the Legio and the Nomyia Church some priests live in the district and supervise the activities of the communities and their lay leaders.

These differences, however, are more superficial than real. In fact, the knowledge which the founders have of the organization and hierarchy of the missionary church which served them as a model is generally limited as to what concerns the higher echelons: of the functions of cardinals, bishops, and archbishops they have been able to observe just what could be seen when these dignitaries made public appearances. It is therefore difficult for them to precisely define their attributes and powers, and most of the movements content themselves with giving them a largely honorific title. The weakness and poor organization of the central power allows local communities great autonomy, reinforced by the lack of means of communication and the natural independence of the Luo in regard to any authority beyond the local group.

Thus, after beginning with the relative diversity of the original models furnished by the missionary churches, a quasi-uniform conception of the ecclesiastical body is formed. All the churches seem composed of two fundamental organs.

The first, which could be called the "head," includes the founder of the church, if he is still alive, and the dignitaries and members of the church who live at its general headquarters, usually situated in Kenya in an urban center or near an important area of development. It is at the headquarters that the original model is best preserved. At this level are those who have had more direct experience in the organization of the mother church and those who have concerned themselves with problems of structure when they drew up the statutes of the movement for official government registration.

At the other pole of the African churches are the local communities, sometimes united under the authority of a priest, a pastor, or a lay leader and, at the regional level, under the nominal authority of some personage—bishop, pastor, or lay leader—responsible to the head of the move-

ment at Kenya. Communities are characterized by a nearly complete autonomy in relation to the head and by the similarity of their internal organization, whatever the church from which they separated.

The fundamental problem of the African churches in regard to organization is the control of the summit over the base. For reasons already given—structural weakness, lack of means of communication—direct control is impossible. The central organs then have recourse to indirect control. The solution consists in naming a regional authority who receives directives from the summit and to whom the faithful can be referred in grave crises and around whom they can gather periodically in order to reaffirm their unity. Even in the most important and best organized churches, like the Pentecostal and Johera churches, in which the annual visit of pastors constitutes a form of direct control, this necessarily remains superficial, for in normal times all the community activities are directed by the local leader without reference to any higher authority.

From every point of view, to adapt a relatively rigid hierarchical system to a society in which no comparable tradition has existed will require a long period of transition during which functional relationships slowly take over the role of interpersonal relationships. Through local leaders, appointed by the base or by the central power, exchanges are made between the communities and the head, exchanges most often limited to the forwarding of funds received in the local communities for the maintenance of the church and the hierarchy.

Generally speaking, the organization of the African churches rests less on the cohesion and power of their hierarchies than on the capacity of the local groups to assume their responsibilities in the spiritual and temporal domains. The intervention of the higher echelons, whether direct or indirect, limited as it is by the conditions pointed out earlier, is made almost superfluous by the accent placed on community activities: prayers for the sick, exorcisms, mutual help, celebration of social events. What is essential in social and

religious life does not involve the ministry of the clergy, whose role is confined to a few specific actions. In contrast to the missionary churches, in which the impetus comes from the hierarchy, the African churches depend on the basic cell, the local community.

### *Material Organization*

What has been observed about the hierarchical organization of the African churches is equally true on the level of their material organization. The latter is inspired by missionary models but is influenced by local conditions. From this there results the formation of two distinct economic cycles, one calling on traditional products and techniques, the other on goods of a modern kind, money in particular. This distinction corresponds to the coexistence in present-day society of a domestic economy that is almost self-sufficient and a market economy limited to a few definite goods of Western origin. These two separate cycles constitute two separate aspects of the life of local communities and, while the traditional cycle chiefly concerns intracommunity relations, the modern cycle ties the communities to the higher echelons of the hierarchy.

The material organization of the local communities includes a certain number of essential adjuncts. They possess a place of worship, usually consisting in a building and an enclosure. They provide for the needs of their priests and their lay leaders, who have to be fed and decently lodged. On the occasion of feasts or the arrival of important guests, the community must furnish food for a great number of guests. These different exigencies call on traditional products and techniques with no need for money. They concern chiefly two areas: the construction of buildings for worship and the housing of church officials, and help in kind to people who devote an appreciable part of their time to the service of the community.

The construction of a community building is not a customary activity, for such buildings did not exist in Luo

society. A house was always built by a group, but for private use or at least for members of the same family. On the contrary, a place of worship, a communal work, is for the use of the community and belongs to all its members unless it is a question of a private oratory, the functions of which have been enlarged.

Methods as well as materials of construction are almost always traditional, for a sheet-metal roof and cement are still too dear for most groups. Nevertheless, the plan of the building can be imitative of the churches built by the missions and its size is often greater than that of a dwelling. So the round hut gives place to a rectangular construction, sometimes big enough to seat a hundred people. Whether round or rectangular, the local churches are built of earth, sometimes of dried bricks, with a wooden framework. The roof is thatched, the floor of beaten earth, as in private homes. Only the Legio church at Kowak possesses a sheet-metal roof. The plan of the interior is always the same. The church consists in one room with a place reserved for those officiating, its location having no reference to the points of the compass. Earthen benches are sometimes arranged in rows so that the faithful can sit down. In general men bring wooden chairs and officials and important visitors sit facing the assembly on chairs lent by the owner of a nearby farm.

Openings are few and narrow: two or three small windows and an opening in the roof to admit light in buildings without windows, particularly in the Roho Church. The chapels of the Nomyia have two doors, one for the women and another for the men; the Roho chapels also have two, one for the dignitaries and one for the simple faithful. The Legio have no special requirements but there is an effort to have new constructions provide a side door near the altar for the priests, as is done in Catholic churches. During religious services, doors and windows can be closed in order to plunge the interior of the building into semidarkness propitious for the development of collective exaltation.

The decoration of the church and its enclosure varies according to church and community. The Legio makes

considerable efforts in this area: within the interior of the building reserved for worship an earthen altar is erected, decorated with pious images and flowers and covered with a white cloth or a piece of tissue. Outside, a garden often surrounds the chapel, with the borders of cultivated flowers, shrubs, walks marked off with whitewashed stones, crosses, rocks with inscriptions, and embroidered banners, as in Catholic missions. The community of Nyabirongo built a wooden portal surmounted by a cross to mark the entrance to the enclosure and to symbolize the entrance into paradise.

The majority of communities, without going so far in Westernized decoration and care, maintain the interior of their buildings with scrupulous propriety. Even when worship takes place under a tree, the place chosen is carefully cleared, beaten down and swept before the weekly service, and in the Roho Church the faithful are asked to remove their shoes before entering. The chapel of the Roho minor branch at Kitembe has painted crosses on walls and doors. In churches of the Johera type and in the Nomyia Church, there is no attempt at decoration. All the communities have near their place of worship a piece of scrap iron hung from a tree which serves to call the faithful to prayer.

As in the case of places of worship, the house of the priest or the local religious leader is constructed with the help of traditional methods and materials. For Joseph Kasia, the Legio priest at Kowak, a celibate and a stranger in the country, this consists of a single hut, without a kitchen or accessory buildings, since his meals are prepared by the women of the community. The house has just one room, with a bed hidden behind a hanging, a table and one or two chairs. Decoration consists of pious pictures and things Joseph uses in his office. Everything is scrupulously neat and proper. His house is built right next to the church he has charge of and where he can officiate every day.

If the priest or the religious leader already has a farm and family when he enters upon his duties, as in the case of Raphael Tieng'o at Siruka or Nelson at Luanda, he can request the help of the faithful for the maintenance of his

house and the construction of new buildings. This is the usual thing, for few priests or religious leaders are celibate, especially in the churches founded on the model of Protestant missionary churches.

Decisions concerning the construction and maintenance of buildings for worship and for the religious leader depend on the community and not on the leader himself, who can only ask for the help of the faithful. A general consent having been given, work groups are formed and the rhythm of operations is determined according to custom and season.

Beyond the construction and maintenance of buildings, the community supplies its leader with help in kind. The case of the celibate priest has been mentioned: being entirely devoted to religious activities, he depends upon the women of the community for his food. But usually, the religious leader is married and works his own land or that lent him by the protector of the community. While the celibate priests, the itinerant preachers, and young seminarians receive help directly levied on the production of the community, the married and established religious leader receives help through work: he can ask the faithful to weed his fields, to help with the principal farm tasks. When he has to receive visitors, however, the community supplies him with a contribution in kind and participates in the preparation of the feast.

The internal economic life of the community brings into play goods, services, techniques, and methods of organization essentially traditional. It is founded on the personal relationships which unite the members of the community and the religious leaders. However, the traditional cycle of exchange cannot suffice to satisfy the needs of the church in the internal sphere and to maintain as well a hierarchical and administrative apparatus, even of a rudimentary kind. In fact, the religious leaders need money to pay their taxes, to dress appropriately, to travel, eventually to send their children to school and, in general, to lead a life in conformity with their position. As for the church itself, it needs locations for centers of worship and funds to pay dues for government registration, to keep a post box, to carry on its administrative

duties, to publish brochures and prayer books, etc.

To take care of these different needs, the African churches, just like the missionary churches, have had to institute a system of regular levies on their entire membership. A contradictory situation results, since the independent churches' criticism of the missionary churches has often had to do with their material demands.

While the traditional economic cycle is horizontal and concerns relationships between members of the community, the modern cycle is vertical and connects the different echelons of the hierarchy. It is a two-way operation, for it includes the collection of funds followed by a partial redistribution. Depending on the individual church, it takes different forms: some gather together in one sum all the money received before redistributing it; others prefer a system of successive deductions at each different level. On the whole, the higher echelons keep the largest share of the collected funds, while the local leaders receive greater help through the operation of the traditional cycle of exchange.

Funds are raised in three ways. Each week a collection or *sadaka* (sacrifice) takes place either during or at the end of the weekly service. The collection is rarely more than a shilling, often less, for a community of about thirty adults. Efforts are made to encourage the faithful to be generous. In the Legio church at Kowak I heard a sermon on the responsibility of the faithful for the development and appearance of their church in the eyes of the world. In Pentecostal meetings, I have been present at a competition organized between the men and the women to see which group was more generous, and, on the occasion of a baptismal ceremony, between the different communities gathered for the feast. This technique, recalling as it does the custom of outbidding one another at a marriage feast, entertains the congregation and produces good results.<sup>4</sup> In the Roho and Pentecostal churches, the collection is accompanied by burlesque songs and dances, accompanied by horns and little bells, inspired by the beer festivals forbidden to the faithful. Some churches record the names of the faithful who



contribute and the amount of their offerings. In most cases, they must present it before the dignitaries, men on one side, women on the other. Only the Legio and the African Catholic Legion take up the collection throughout the congregation—more or less in those communities not forbidden to enter the church with money—in order to conform to the tradition of the Catholic Church.

A most important source of revenue is the annual church tax or *zaka*. Like the missionary churches, the independent movements ask their faithful for a yearly contribution of a few shillings for the support of the clergy and the functioning of the institution. This requirement is given a poor reception everywhere, and various arguments must be used to persuade the faithful. So the Israel Church, among others, insists on the necessity of paying the yearly assessment in order to be a full member of the community and have the benefit of decent burial at death.

The faithful are also appealed to for contributions when the clergy need their help to meet exceptional obligations. These include, first of all, the payment of the religious leader's taxes, for the administration is very strict on this point, and the faithful cannot allow their religious leader to be put in prison. Less often, the community may pay the school fees for their leader's children, for most of the faithful cannot pay for their own children's studies. Lastly, collections are organized to pay for things indispensable for worship, for the livelihood of the priest, or for the realization of common projects. Thus at the Legio church at Kowak, a collection was taken up after Mass to pay for the transportation of material needed to complete the construction of a place of worship. In the Johera church, meetings took place for a number of weeks to decide on an exceptional collection, fixed at thirty shillings per adult man, to construct a European style church in the district. But it is rare that the faithful are asked for sums that large and it is most often a matter of buying wine for the Mass, a white robe for the priest, or covering the travel expenses of some delegate for a celebration in Kenya to be attended by members of the whole church. These collections generally

meet with more success than the regular offerings intended just for the support of the hierarchy.

The sacraments serve as occasions for obtaining a supplementary contribution from the faithful. Just like the missionary churches which they denounced for their practices in this matter, the African churches ask for an offering for baptism, circumcision, confirmation, sometimes also for ordination and episcopal consecration. This offering is often made in the traditional form, the officiant receiving an animal just as the diviner-magician used to do. On this point, a wide variety exists between one church and another.

The collection of funds is done at the level of the local community and the religious leaders are responsible for seeing that they reach the higher echelons of the hierarchy. The situation is not the same in all the churches. For example, the Legio affects great contempt for money, the symbol of evil and corruption; this external attitude does not prevent the hierarchy from asking to be assured of revenues. Differences between churches can be related to their age: a movement of recent foundation does not have the same needs as an old movement with a developed central administration and long-established hierarchy. The Legio can content itself with irregular revenues and utilize the contempt for money as a platform for publicity. In the Nomyia Church, on the contrary, the circulation of funds from the base to the summit is strictly controlled: a portion of the *sadaka* is kept by the priest and the rest goes to the bank in Musoma; all the proceeds are then divided among the bishops, who receive the *zaka* besides, while the priests collect the offerings of the faithful for circumcision "as the Bible prescribed." In the Johera Church, the *sadaka* is collected every Sunday by the community leaders and sent to the treasurer of the district who counts the funds received and sends them to the central office in Kenya. The principal lay leaders receive their salary once a year, but in case of difficulty they can ask the central office for help. The lay leaders of small communities content themselves by deducting a part of the *sadaka*, while pastors receive the proceeds of the *zaka*.

With variations in the methods of allotment and

accounting, all the churches depend on the same type of financial organization and encounter the same reluctance on the part of the faithful to contribute to the support of their hierarchy, or at least to assure them a life style above their own. Here we encounter the fundamentally egalitarian bent of Luo society. Moreover, the attitude of the faithful in regard to questions of material organization reflects their idea of the church: for them, it is plain that, especially in local communities, religion is a way of life rather than an institution. Nevertheless, we must anticipate a development in the modern cycle of exchange to the detriment of the traditional cycle, depending on the extent of economic and social evolution, and the increase in the needs of the religious leaders living in urban areas.

In spite of the evident resemblance between the African and the Western churches, the former have created an original model adapted both to local conditions and the necessities of modern evolution. The head of the African churches is steeped in an occidental milieu, and their leaders are in contact with the life style, the culture, and the economic system imported by the colonizer. Besides, they have to face situations which demand a response other than the traditional, notably in their relations with administrative authorities, political organs, the missionary churches, the other African churches, and in the management of their finances. On the contrary, the basic unit, that is, the local community, remains deep within a quasi-traditional milieu in regard to culture, economic organization, modes of life and of thought. These two poles of the system, the summit and the base, experience a cultural differentiation in proportion to the age and importance of the church. The older and more important the church is, the greater the difference. The spiritual power comes from the summit and is diffused at the base. The message of the prophets, the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit, new ideas, come from the head and are transmitted to the lower echelons through successive delegations, although local communities are capable of communicating directly with the divinity by prayer and the exercise of

the gifts of the Spirit. On the other hand, the temporal power, that is, the power of decision and of financial support, comes from the base. In the local community authority is diffuse, originating in a general consensus, and it covers all activities. The closer one approaches the head, the more authority becomes specialized and weak. The number of people exercising it are fewer and fewer, its field of application is more circumscribed, and its efficacy more and more theoretical. In traditional society the chief was not obeyed because he occupied a higher position in the hierarchy or because he possessed the power to force others but because he expressed the popular will and formulated instructions corresponding to the trend of general opinion.

This dual circuit of exchange is indispensable in the life of the church, and, deprived of their head, local groups stagnate and die. But for the faithful, the center of religious life is not the residence of their top leaders; it is the local community, where all cultural and social activities take place, a living reality rather than an institution. Its structures and functioning will be the subject studied next.

### *The Local Community*

*Geographic and Human Organization.* The community cell is the religious unit within which weekly common worship takes place. It does not correspond to a "parish," a term most often designating the whole region served by whatever local official is responsible for worship. A parish can contain several communities as well as isolated faithful. The basic cell, on the contrary, possesses a social reality and exists only through the cohesion of its members, being thus differentiated from the parish, an administrative fiction capable of surviving the disappearance of real communities. In spite of their spontaneous and sometime ephemeral character, these community cells are the flesh and blood of a church: they testify to the spread of its doctrine, support its action financially, and embody the principles of the faith in everyday life. Although they are attached to

different churches, they are dependent on the same conditions inherent in their milieu. The geographic, economic, and social context, the lack of means of communication, the illiteracy still preponderant in the district of North Mara, the clan and lineage structures are the elements which impose themselves on all the churches and set limits on the size, recruitment, and activities of the local group. The descriptions that follow apply therefore to the communities of all African churches in the North Mara district in an attempt to bring out the fundamental traits found in all rather than to emphasize superficial differences.

Geographically, the community is defined by its radius and its center of worship. The faithful who meet regularly for prayer in the same place of worship come for the most part from a neighborhood unit, the *gweng'*, consisting of a hill and its surroundings for a radius of a mile or so. The *gweng'* does not refer to the distribution of clans in a territory and several clans can be found represented there, or even several ethnic groups, as in the Tatwe region or along the shore of Lake Victoria. But in regions that have long been occupied, like Kowak, the inhabitants of the *gweng'* often belong to the same clan or even the same lineage: the Kamot clan has supplied most of the members of the local Legio community in that area. The *gweng'* is therefore a living unit which can serve as a base for the establishment of a local community. Furthermore, it does not necessarily coincide with it: at Siruka, only two African churches have a center of worship, the Legio and African Catholic Legion, and the faithful of other movements go to pray in chapels built in neighboring *gwenge*. On the whole, however, the faithful live within a hour's walk of the nearest community.

The place of worship is not chosen because it is geographically centralized for the community members but because of certain practical exigencies, particularly the fact that land cannot be bought and the ground needed for the construction of a chapel must be given by a member of the group. This is usually a rich and pious man, an influential member of the community, who supplies a site near his farm,

receiving into his home visitors and faithful at the time of big collective celebrations. However, this position does not necessarily give such a person any superiority in religious matters, unless he himself is the religious leader who had the chapel built near his house, as is often the case. The rich man who lends his land for the construction of a place of worship can also invite the religious leader to settle on his farm. He has a house built for him and his family, gives him fields to cultivate and cattle to provide for his children, exactly as he would do for his own son; the priest Joel in the Kitembe community is a case in point. The community then possesses a geographic, religious, and social center and is placed under the patronage of an eminent man so that protection and mutual help are assured just as they once were, in traditional society, under the head of the lineage.

The size of the community, that is, the number of its adult members,<sup>5</sup> is also an important element in its make-up. According to my observations, communities never number less than ten members. For a chapel to be built, about twenty members are needed. For a community to be really alive and active, it should have thirty faithful. Beyond fifty members, it divides into active and passive members. Beyond eighty, an active minority animates a passive majority. It is rare that a community numbers more than a hundred, that is, a hundred members who regularly take part in the religious and social activities of the group. The Legio community at Kowak, which attains that number, was the largest of all those that I visited. Beyond a hundred the tendency is to form smaller units. One of these remains the principal center where the religious leader lives, and the others become secondary centers attached to the first and served by an official responsible for the whole. The multiplication and dissemination of communities facilitates the recruitment of new faithful and gives a greater number of people the opportunity to participate actively in the life of the church and of personally assuming responsibility at the local level. However, with the exception of the Johera Church and the Pentecostal Assemblies, the majority of the other movements fail to

recognize this fact and, in imitation of the missionary churches, try to group their faithful in communities as large as possible.

In most communities, whatever their size, women are more numerous than men. They constitute about two-thirds, sometimes more, of the active members of all the churches. They exercise everywhere the responsibilities proper to them distinct from those of the men. It is they who direct the singing during worship, who organize prayer for the sick, mutual help, and social activities.

The men, fewer in number, are divided into three categories: men of mature age, between twenty-five and forty-five years old, who hold all the positions of responsibility, retain special powers, or exercise honorary functions; young people who are learners and try, in their turn, to become influential members of the church; old men, who belong to the simple faithful. This division of the faithful expresses, it seems, the triumph of the young over the old, whose power to communicate with the ancestors has been abrogated by the new religion.

Young children follow their mother to church, but unlike the missionary churches, which center their concern on the religious formation of the young—their baptism, catechetical instruction and, in the Catholic Church, first communion—the African churches allow great liberty to the parents as to their children's education in the faith. The baptism of young children is little practiced. When the young reach the age of puberty, they freely choose the community to which they wish to belong and it is often different from their father's and mother's.

*Community and Lineage.* The traditional community based the association of its members on blood bonds, and kinship was the foundation for social organization. All human relations, with the exception of trade and war, ephemeral by nature, were defined in reference to a real or mythical ancestor. Kinship ties involved in a permanent and coherent way the conduct of the members of the group and united them in a complex whole of rights and duties. The

most active element in Luo society was the lineage. It enjoyed an autonomy as great as the clan's. Members of a lineage could retrace their descent to the real founder of the group and direct relationship existed among them.

With modern evolution, relationships between members of the lineage weakened, and little by little the rights and duties accompanying them lost their importance and sanctions. The individual then found himself more and more isolated in the face of the increasing difficulties of life and a complex society moving farther and farther beyond the reach of his understanding and control. He thus found himself deprived of the support of his group at the very time when he most needed it.

The local communities of the African churches offer their faithful a welcoming and welcome structure with a familiar look but a new principle. Its dimensions and organization, as well as some of its activities, recall those of the lineage. However, the local religious community replaces blood ties by spiritual bonds and assumes new functions which the lineage did not have, enlarging the play of fellowship in the scale of modern society. It seems like a social unit with rights and duties not bound up with being born into the world but with belonging to the family of God's children. This is what a member of the Legio said to me, recalling the words of Jesus: "It is the Legio members who are my mother, my father, and my brothers, for my clan and my relatives have turned their backs on me and run away when I meet them on the road. If we adore the same God and share the same faith, why are we divided?"

The resemblance between the community and the lineage is due first to its size. On an average it is composed of forty members or twenty families, corresponding rather closely to the extent of a lineage. The parallel is all the closer when members of the community belong to the same neighborhood and share the land of the same *gweng*'. Furthermore, in a society where there are no classes according to age, no associations for work or play, social structures are thought of first of all in terms of kinship. This explains in part the



success of communities in the rural milieu in contrast to the failure of large political and economic organizations which resemble nothing familiar.<sup>6</sup>

Like the lineage, the local community is composed of people who must meet one another face to face in the matter of rights and duties. But these reciprocal obligations have not the same general and constraining character as in the lineage. Outside of public opinion, no sanctions exist as to their exercise, and, in spite of the apparent identification of spiritual bonds with blood ties, the former do not have the same force as the latter. The community is then characterized by a structure in which constraint and obligations fill a rather weak role but in which initiative and good will can play a considerable part. In broad lines it evokes the lineage and borrows from it a kind of organization compatible with the local culture. In detail, however, much greater liberty and flexibility prevail: if there is little possibility of an individual dissociating himself from his lineage and no possibility at all of changing it, he can always change his community and even his church if he does not feel at home there.

Again the community resembles the lineage in its activities. It is the framework for religious life, as the lineage formerly was the framework for ancestor worship. Today as before it is through the community that the individual can communicate with the supernatural world.<sup>7</sup>

The community is also the framework for celebrating social events, especially marriages and funerals which, together with births, are the great occasions for festivities among the Luo. In traditional society and, for many, even in our day, marriage ceremonies include several stages arranged stepwise over some years. The idea of marriage as a contract between two families that really takes effect only after a probationary period cannot correspond with Western liturgy. The African churches have not all recognized this fact and the Legio, as well as the African Catholic Legion, propose to their faithful a version of the sacrament of marriage directly inspired by the Catholic Church. Others, however, have tried to Christianize the traditional ceremony, and the moment

celebrated by the community is the first phase of the marriage, that is, when man and wife begin their life together.

The observance of funerals is an event of considerable importance in Luo society. It is a particularly sacred duty to be present at the burial of a relative. The obligation weighs the more heavily since absence can bring about the accusation of having caused the death of the deceased. Most of the African churches forbid their faithful to participate in the rites established by custom such as riding their cows through the farmyard of the deceased, lamenting in the traditional manner, blowing horns, etc. The local communities have undertaken to Christianize the ceremonies in such a way as to celebrate correctly and with all the display necessary—but without recourse to “pagan” practices—the funerals of their members and their near relatives. The faithful of many communities will take to the road for such occasions, dressed in the uniform of the church, if it has one, and, as the case may be, provided with their musical instruments. The traditional weeping and lamenting are replaced by singing, praying, dancing, reading the Sacred Scriptures, and preaching intended to console the relatives of the deceased by the promise of resurrection of the dead and life hereafter. The parallel between the spiritual and temporal families is thus established by the participation of the members of the community in the funeral rites of one of their own, while the visits of delegates from communities farther away recalls the homage of neighboring lineages belonging to the same clan.

Among the activities of the lineage, mutual help took first place. Members were solidly one for the other: no one must lack for food while others ate and left them hungry; the sick, the old, the invalided were the charge of the whole community; guarding the cattle, certain farm tasks, the building of dwellings were communal activities organized within the framework of the lineage. The African churches have taken over the system of mutual aid in the name of Christian charity and of the love which should exist among brothers.

Mutual help can take different forms according to the

nature of the needs to be satisfied. Sometimes it calls on traditional techniques and products—the construction of a house, the weeding of a field, harvesting. Sometimes it responds to modern needs—medical care, taxes, money for travel. In the first instance, work groups are formed and collectively accomplish the required tasks; in the second, a collection is organized and the results turned over to the person concerned.

Mutual help has the same nature in the local community as in the lineage. It is a matter of helping members who cannot, for reasons independent of their will—sickness or misfortune, for example—satisfy their basic needs or fulfill their role as this is defined according to the criteria of the group. Mutual aid does not apply to attempts to raise the level of individual or collective life: it has to do with Christian charity, conceived of as a concrete human relation, and not with economic development. Mutual help takes place as a normal function of the Christian community assimilated to the lineage; it expresses both the interdependence of the members of the group, in which spiritual kinship replaces blood relationship, and the fundamental unity existing between religious life and daily life.

Mutual help is inspired by tradition in its methods as well as in its basis and objective. The division of work between the sexes is respected in the distribution of tasks, and the direction of operations falls to those put in charge by popular choice. Thus the construction of the framework for a house, the clearing of a field, the repair of a roof, are directed by a man. On the contrary, it will be a woman who will direct the weeding of a field, the plastering of a house, and every other activity specifically feminine. The authority of those in charge rests, in conformity with custom, on the unanimous consent of the members of the group, and nothing will be done until agreement is established among them. The one in charge can only make a proposal and wait for the conclusion of the discussion that follows. This can sometimes be prolonged if the subject is important and implies a considerable effort on the part of the community.

But the functions of the community extend beyond those of the lineage. Some activities formerly reserved to specialists are now taken over by the group: techniques of healing by prayer and of exorcism replace those of the diviner, the magician, and the herbalist; prayers for rain made directly to God by the community supersede the rituals of the rainmaker. On the other hand, the group must face up to new problems which the lineage did not know: the administration of funds, for example, or relations with the central organs.

The local community possesses its own social life. It is at the same time both more and less than a lineage: its field of activities is broader, but the bonds between its members are voluntary. They belong to the family of the elect, at the same time human and divine, in which the bonds of the spirit replace those of the flesh. When local communities are made up of members of the same clan or lineage, the new situation only confirms the traditional solidarities; but it seems that communities of African churches are more numerous in regions where the clans are largely mixed in such a way that cooperation between neighbors rests principally on the basis of their religious adherence. This makes it possible for people to cross over the boundaries and divisions of traditional society and to resolve problems which would be insoluble in the framework of the kinship group.

*Functions of the Community.* Each of the activities just described has a precise end immediately understandable to those who take part in them. Prayer for the sick and exorcism are considered as directly efficacious for the alleviation of physical or psychical illness. Mutual help is meant to assist the unfortunate and as an expression of the Christian charity which ought to reign in the hearts of God's children. These activities have, moreover, an indirect but essential influence on the life of the community.

A goodly number of them combine to create in the group a deep feeling of spiritual and material solidarity. Every undertaking that unites the faithful in the pursuit of the same end exercises an influence in this way, whether it is the

construction of a place of worship, mutual help, the celebration of social events, weekly public worship, journeys together, or other enterprises. Acting together on the basis of personal and consistent relationships is what transforms an aggregate into a community.

In other aspects of life, the local groups tend to compensate for the frustrations felt by their members in family and social life. The mobility which exists in the hierarchy or between churches, the accent placed on the gifts of the Spirit open up ways parallel to those that remained closed to them in their surroundings. The greater the feeling of inferiority, the more important the compensation. Thus a barren woman or even one whose children died at an early age can become an inspired prophetess like Gaudencia Aoko. An unstable man, whose professional and family life have been a failure, or who is afflicted by nervous troubles like Simeo Ondeto can become a respected leader, an interpreter of the Holy Spirit. This is true for individuals; it is also true for groups. Women, in particular, so often browbeaten in traditional society, find in the African churches the means of expressing their personality. In the Legio, it is they who take the initiative in praying for the sick and in exorcism, and their role is so important in the activities of the communities that they sometimes neglect their husband and children.

Other practices have as their effect emotional and nervous release: trance, convulsions accompanying exorcism, ecstasy in possession of the Holy Spirit, community singing and dancing. In the Roho Church the moment of climax in the weekly service is the dance before God accompanied by community chanting and the beating of drums. In the Warrouk Church and the minor branch of the Roho Church, a sort of collective lamentation takes place and each one gives vent to his repentance with cries and sighs, improvising his individual prayer. In the Nomyia Church, the whole community goes into a kind of controlled trance for a quarter of an hour by repeating the same chant to a rapid rhythm and the swaying of their bodies. In the Legio, individual manifestations—speaking in tongues, convulsions, trances—are

routine. In the churches of the Johera type, singing is always the essential element of weekly worship and performs the same office in a less violent way.

In reality, these different activities have many effects and it is difficult to say to what extent, for example, singing is a unifying factor or a means of relieving nervous tension. They all contribute to the stabilization of the whole, and when certain elements are absent or when the effect produced is contrary to the stability or dynamism of the group, the movement declines or stagnates. The African Catholic Legion and the Warrouk Church, for instance, are not recruiting new faithful, while the Legio or the Pentecostal Church multiply their communities.

Through their structures, their activities, and the constant use of familiar forms, symbols, and concepts, the local communities of the African churches offer their members a society at the level of daily life which encompasses all the aspects of existence and supplies an immediate response to individual and collective problems. This essential role of the community is not, however, its only one. Just as the lineage forged the bond between the individual and the clan and the clan tied the lineage to a larger unit, a people or an ethnic group, so the community attaches the individual to the church and the church puts him in relation to the different societies of which it forms a part. A welcome and welcoming structure, it is also a window on the outside world, a means of communication with and participation in national and world society.

The community is distinguished from the lineage first of all by its principle of association. Instead of biological brotherhood, a restrictive principle which fixed rigid limits to the constitution of the group and its increase, it is founded on the notion of ideological brotherhood, which, theoretically, allows for unlimited growth, a tendency reinforced by the universalist and proselytizing character of Christian doctrine. The hostility that existed between independent groups and neighboring ethnic bodies gives way to a missionary mentality, and despite tensions which can remain,

the ethnic origins of the faithful cannot be a criterion for membership in the community. The founders of the Warrouk and Israel Churches were not Luo. Nevertheless, practically, the language barrier suffices to limit the formation of interethnic communities, and, in spite of the unanimous attitude of the local leaders and faithful on this point, the presence of a BaKuria or a Suba at weekly worship is a very rare event. Much more real is the feeling that individuals have of participating in the life of the church and through it of participating to a certain degree in the life and advancement of society in general. The more powerless the faithful feel in the political and economic realm on the national and even the regional level, the more important is the role this feeling plays in their life.

More important still, through belonging to the community the faithful are joined to the whole of Christianity. On the local level an intense desire for ecumenism exists and members of one church readily go to pray in a neighboring community attached to another denomination, African or missionary, saying: "There is only one God; we all pray the same, and it cannot be bad to pray together." Relations between churches at the higher echelons are also followed with interest and the different projects for federating the independent churches in Kenya have been favorably received generally. Also, in all the communities that I have visited, I have been asked about the situation of Christianity in my country and for means of contacting French religious leaders. In the Pentecostal Church, the return of a young pastor just back from studying in Canada was celebrated with considerable enthusiasm.

Relations established by the community between its members and the world outside are not all the same. The head of the church is plunged in an urban environment, where evolution is rapid, new ideas abound, the sources of information as well as the pressures exercised by the environment are multiple. These different influences reverberate on the base haphazardly through the visits of dignitaries, pilgrimages of the faithful to the headquarters of

the church, new immigrants from Kenya. In the Fweny Mar Lam Church, the brother of the founder, a medical attendant in Nairobi, returns periodically to Tanzania, bringing with him all kinds of innovations which are then transmitted to the local communities. These local communities in turn play the role of assimilation centers, receiving impulses, digesting them, and transmitting them to their members in a form compatible with their mode of life and thought. It is at this level that articulation between traditional and modern cultures is effected. It sometimes happens that communities separate from the head, like the minor branch of the Roho Church or the African Catholic Legion. They then continue to function in a closed circuit but their dynamism feels the effect of this break and the lack of renewal of their ideas: their initial energy quickly flags, giving way to a certain stagnation of organization and ideas.

There exists, therefore, through the community as a go-between, a double circuit of relations between the faithful and society in general, a feeling of sharing in the life of the world and the influence it exercises on the life of the members of the African churches. The community plays a basic role in this exchange: through the nature and dimensions of the relations existing between the members, on one hand, and the relations it maintains with other communities and the head of the church on the other, it forms the hinge joining everyday life to the world scene.

## Notes

1. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, Macmillan, 1965), p. 59.

2. Since the organization of the Israel Church in North Mara has already been studied, it will not be taken up here.

3. The Warrouk Church is too small to have regular communications with Kenya or to have a dignitary travel from there to visit the isolated adherents in Tanzania.



4. The game consists in asking one of those present to do or not do something—to sing, dance, sit in a certain place, etc. This request is matched with a stake and can be countered by a higher stake put up by someone else. The bidding is continued until one of the two gives up; the master of the house then pockets the stakes and has the victor's decision carried out. In this way, several hundred shillings can change hands in a night.

5. Active, not nominal, members are meant.

6. Georges Balandier, *The Sociology of Black Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 462.

7. It is not a matter of assimilating Christianity to the cult of ancestors, but of bringing out the role of the community as the center of religious life, a role which will be discussed more in detail in Chapter 6.

## CHAPTER SIX

# The Religious Activities in the African Churches

In the traditional society, daily life and religious expression and experience were intermingled: every action had meaning and implication in relation to the supernatural world and put man into communication with the different forces that controlled every moment of his life.

Modern evolution has affected this intimacy with the supernatural, and religious life has taken a specific form distinct from profane life. Prayer becomes a formula recited by heart instead of being left to the inspiration of the moment. Worship is celebrated at regular intervals which order the existence of the faithful instead of being a recourse in grave crises. And, above all, religion becomes a matter of choice and not of birth.

In becoming detached from everyday life, religious life has elaborated a system of activities and forms of expression proper to itself. Some have for their object rendering due homage to the divinity and relating the faithful to him: these are worship and sacramental acts. Others have for their end helping the faithful to escape the evils that overwhelm them, thanks to the divine aid and the means of salvation that God sends to his people. Through these forms of expression and activities, the group and its members experience the divine. In different degrees, man discovers God when he tries to make himself heard by God.

*Worship*

Like the missionary churches from which they separated, all the African churches celebrate weekly worship. Some, wishing to affirm their continuity with the tradition of the mother church, have kept the same day of worship. This is the case, for example, with the Johera Church, which is thought of as the African version of the Anglican Church, and the Legio Maria, which considers itself as the real Catholic Church. Others, on the contrary, like the Nomyia and Roho churches, have chosen Saturday instead of Sunday, both to distinguish themselves from the mother church and to affirm their character as a chosen people by drawing a parallel between themselves and the Jewish people. On the whole, however, most of the churches are content to follow the custom of the mother church: Fweny Mar Lam, founded by a former Seventh Day Adventist, holds its worship on Saturday; the Warrouk Church and the African Catholic Legion, whose founders were respectively Anglican and Catholic, have kept to Sunday. As to the Israel Church, besides the Sunday worship inherited from the Pentecostals, it proposes to its faithful a public meeting on Friday consecrated to confession and purification by the Holy Spirit in commemoration of the Crucifixion.

Three types of worship are found in the African churches. Two of them, the Legio and the A.C.L., have retained the Catholic model, centered around the Mass. Two others, the Israel and Roho churches, have worked out an original form of worship based on the reception of the Holy Spirit. Other movements have a simple liturgy of the word, following the classic Protestant type but adapted to the local culture.

I have assisted at two high Masses of the Legio, one at the residence of the bishop at Rabuor and the other in the Kowak community, where Joseph Kasia is the priest. In a number of details the two ceremonies closely resembled one another. Mass is said with the priest's back to the congregation and, during its essential parts, in Latin to show that the

Legio keeps the true traditions of the Catholic Church as taught by the White Fathers and since—after Vatican II—abandoned by the Maryknoll Fathers.

Before Mass, the faithful recite the rosary. The priest then arrives and prepares the altar, lighting the candles and arranging the things needed for the cult. During this time, the faithful recite morning prayers, the Our Father, the Hail Mary. When they have finished and while the priest is vesting, they sing a Catholic hymn. Then the ceremony properly so-called begins with the *Asperges me*, and the faithful are seized with convulsions and cry out when touched by the holy water. The priest recites the prayers at the foot of the altar, then the Kyrie and the Gloria are sung with omissions: a word, a sentence, a paragraph that have slipped from memory. The priest then reads the Epistle and the Gospel, first in Latin or Swahili, depending on what book he has, then in Luo, using a translation of the New Testament. He preaches for about a half hour, repeating the same ideas and the same words, stressing certain sentences to make a greater impression on his hearers. Meanwhile the faithful come in and go out or wait patiently for the end. The Credo is sung like the Gloria, with numerous omissions. The priest says the prayers of the offertory and the consecration in a whisper, reading them from his book; according to the readiness of the community, one or several hosts are consecrated. At Rabour the day of my visit there were none: the host had been replaced by a small crucifix and the chalice was empty, for Mass wine is dear and difficult to buy.

The communion is particularly interesting: a “sin detector” stands at the communion table beside the priest; when the faithful kneel to receive communion, he places his hands on their shoulders for several moments; his body trembles, indicating the presence of the Spirit within him. If he is not satisfied with the costume of the communicants, which must be white, or with their interior purity, he sends them back to their places. In this way only a very small number of the faithful are admitted to communion and the number of hosts consumed is thereby restricted.

All during the ceremony, Luo chants and hymns of Catholic origin are sung, alternating with Latin hymns, allowing for much participation by the congregation, for most of the faithful cannot respond to the priest in Latin. After a semblance of cleansing the chalice, the priest finishes the Mass with the *Ite missa est*, the blessing, and the last Gospel. Then the priest leaves the altar while the faithful sing a canticle. Following different prayers of thanksgiving formerly in use in the Catholic Church and some litanies, the faithful in their turn leave the church singing a final canticle.

In spite of individual manifestations of the presence of the Spirit in the most devout faithful—cries, groans, sighs, convulsive movements at the most solemn moments—the priest remains the principal actor as in the Catholic Church. On the contrary, both before and after Mass, laymen direct the prayers.

The A.C.L. offers its faithful a service of the same kind, with the traditional Catholic Mass in Latin. The two ceremonies at which I assisted in Marcellianus Orongo's home at Siruka were in marked contrast to those of the Legio. Instead of the tense and exalted atmosphere that supervened at Ravour and Kowak, at least in the first rows, the assembly at Siruka was entirely passive, incapable of following the dialogue with the priest, who was not only the principal but the sole actor. Here was an attempt to imitate as perfectly as possible the Catholic ritual without any innovation such as the "sin detector" and individual ecstasies.

The weekly service in the Roho Church is entirely different. In contrast to the Legio and the A.C.L., which have preserved as integrally as possible the rites of the mother church, the Roho Church has worked out a completely different ritual from the Anglican Church's, rejecting the traditional Book of Common Prayer. It has even published its own book written in a secret language, "the language of heaven," revealed to Barnabas, one of the high dignitaries of the Church and its present head. This language consists in an inversion of the letters of the alphabet and the book contains a method for learning how to read the traditional Christian

prayers—the Our Father, the Creed—and some passages from the Gospels as these are rewritten in “the language of heaven.” The book serves at the same time as a reader and a manual for ritual, although it does not indicate the order of the service. Few of the faithful possess one and, even if they did, one wonders how many could read it. But they know the prayers written in the secret language by heart as well as hymns translated into that language and they recite and sing these at certain times during the service. The use of the language often corresponds with a recrudescence of manifestations of the Spirit.

I have assisted at the service of the Roho Church several times in different communities. The smallest, at Tatwe, took place under a tree near the farm of the local catechist. The site had been carefully cleared and beaten hard by his wife, who exercises the function of “sin detector” in the community. The largest group, in Olando, is also the oldest in the district, numbers about eighty faithful, and has a big church.

In all the instances observed, the service takes place in the same way. The faithful are required to remove their shoes before entering the enclosure reserved for the cult. If this takes place in a building, doors and windows are shut and light comes in from an opening in the roof so that the faithful are not distracted in their devotions by what goes on outside. Different personages—for example, preachers, elders, “sin detectors,” important visitors belonging to the Kenya hierarchy—are seated facing the assemblage, separated from it by a little table covered with a white cloth and adorned with a bouquet of foliage for decorative purposes only.

The first part of the service consists in prayers, songs, the reading of the Bible: an opening prayer said by the leader of the ceremonies, followed by a song; more prayers, in common and individually; the Our Father and the Creed in the revealed language and in Luo; different invocations. The texts read are chosen by the leader of the ceremonies according to his individual inspiration.

The second part of the service includes preaching, singing, and dancing with drum accompaniment, and possession of

some of the faithful by the Holy Spirit. The singing during the first part is without accompaniment or time is kept simply by hand clapping; during the second part a drum or drums, depending on the size of the community, go into action and give the signal for the dance. The sermons generally consist in short quotations from the Bible, paraphrased and commented on. Preachers make a blend of many different themes in the same sermon: sin, Jesus the Savior, the evils of alcohol, and others. As the sermons usually last a long time, they are interspersed with songs and dances. Sometimes a drum roll advises the preacher that his time for speaking has run out.

Dancing to the rhythm of song and drum is the culminating point of the service, the moment of the faithful's communion in one and the same act, the time when ecstasies take place. Men and women dance separately. Some, under the influence of the Spirit, begin to whirl around and around, leaving the group of dancers gathered between the congregation and the important personages and sometimes falling to the ground in ecstasy. At the end of the dance someone helps them up and, after having calmed them, brings them back to their places. In general, these manifestations show consideration and do not interfere with the order of the ceremony. All the faithful do not participate in the dance: they are called by the Spirit and come forward; otherwise, they stay in their places and keep time with a simple swaying of the body.

In the third part of the services the faithful are encouraged to express themselves: public confessions (and sometimes accusations), testimonies, and questions take place. During the course of a service in the Olando community, a man spoke before the congregation, telling about a dream that he had had and asking for help in interpreting it. He had dreamed that four people were to pass through a narrow door in order to enter into a farm yard. One of them had a very big head and he remained wedged in the narrow opening. Then someone came to him from the farm and gave him a paper on which it was written that he

was not yet ready to follow the religion course and must wait for the next one. The dream was discussed, different interpretations were proposed by the congregation, but no definitive response was made to the question.

The collection takes place at the end of the service, with singing and dancing designed not to bring on ecstasies but to amuse the faithful and encourage them to be generous. Men and women bring forward their offerings separately and place them before the officials of the community. Sometimes, at least in larger communities, their names and the amount of their offerings are written in a special register. The service can be followed by prayer for the sick and a seance of exorcism, if the occasion presents itself, then a repast is offered to the community leaders at a farm near the place of worship, while the simple faithful return to their homes. The whole lasts about three hours.

The weekly service of the Israel Church is much like this, according to the descriptions given by Welbourn and Ogot and by Whisson.<sup>1</sup> The different phases progress in the same way, with a first preparatory part during which songs of western origin alternate with songs of Luo origin. The public confession plays a more important part than in the Roho Church: when the church first began, the whole congregation used to confess their sins and then be seized by the Spirit; since then efforts have been made to regulate these outpourings and to make them individual rather than collective. These two movements give wide scope to the manifestations of the Spirit and individual initiative. Welbourn writes of the Israel Church, "Freedom within order is an essential of the church's worship."<sup>2</sup> This applies equally to the Roho Church.

In the Nomyia Church and churches of the Johera type, the service consists in a liturgy of the word, with some prayers and much singing. Some groups allow limited manifestations of the presence of the Spirit, others forbid it completely. The two principal movements of the Johera type, the Johera Church itself and the Pentecostal Assemblies, accent preaching and singing.



The service that I attended in a community of the Johera movement at Luanda began with a procession that led us from the house of the community head, Nelson, to the chapel located in the yard of his farm. Once we were in church, the service began with the entrance prayers from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, to which the Johera declares itself faithful. In fact, the head of the community confided to me later that my visit had much troubled the officials and the faithful, for they were afraid that I had come from Europe "...to see if they were paying proper respect to religion without deforming it. For the Europeans brought it here and they could decide to forbid it." Then the service went on with singing, sometimes Anglican hymns translated into Luo but with Western melodies and words from the Book of Common Prayer; sometimes with songs composed of words inspired by the Bible set to traditional melodies, hymns found with some variations throughout the African churches of the district with the exception of the Legio and the A.C.L. The Anglican Church itself has a large repertoire on which all the other movements draw. Singing alternates with Scripture reading and preaching. But no dancing or collective movement is authorized and nobody is permitted to fall into ecstasy during the ceremony.

I have also attended several services of the Pentecostal Church in different communities in the regions of Tatwe and Kowak. Organization is fundamentally the same as in the Johera Church—praying, singing, preaching. Worship is concluded by confession, prayer for the sick, and exorcism, performed by the leaders of the community while the faithful surround the patients, sing, and clap their hands. The Pentecostal Church seems to have found the middle ground between uncontrolled enthusiasm and passivity. The atmosphere of the service is essentially joyous without any violent manifestations or forms of expression that reveal tension and anxiety; the participation of the faithful has a prominent but well-ordered place without individual efforts to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. The chants are better

interpreted, the repertoire is richer, some communities even have a chorus. Efforts at harmonization, the use of Swahili and even of English in the refrains, show the Church's concern to keep pace with modern evolution in its modes of expression.

The churches whose cults we have described up until now are relatively old, since the most recent was founded in 1962. They have, therefore, had time to give a relatively stable form to their worship and variations from one community to another are comparatively unimportant. On the contrary, the Fweny Mar Lam Church, founded in 1965, exhibited in 1966 a mixture of rituals borrowed from many sources, and the arrangement of the service largely followed the inspiration of the local leaders. The description of the worship at which I assisted in the Tatwe region will show how a ceremony of this kind is spontaneously organized in an African movement.

Ten men and nine women were gathered together under a tree near a farm. The priest was dressed in a long red robe and was giving a sermon when I arrived. The men were dressed in Western clothes, some had taken off their shoes, others had not. The women were almost all dressed in white or wore white kerchiefs on their heads. According to the initials embroidered on their clothing, three were members of the Seventh Day Adventist (S.D.A.) Church and one of the Israel Church. Among the men too were faithful of other churches.

The sermon was of the classic type: someone, at the preacher's request, read a sentence from the Bible and the preacher repeated it several times with emphasis, stressing and paraphrasing the words. The passages chosen had no relationship to one another; some came from the New Testament, some from the Old.

After the first sermon came songs borrowed from the Pentecostals, the S.D.A.'s, the Israel Church, and some composed by the founder himself, who was present at the ceremony. No hand clapping or drum beating accompanied them. Then the three S.D.A.'s gave a kind of performance composed of two songs and passages from the New Testa-

ment and the Book of Revelation, one of the women reciting these by heart.

Other songs followed, alternating with prayer in common. One of the leaders recited the Our Father and a short invocation to the Blessed Trinity by himself. Then the founder, Joash Okoth, gave a sermon during which he alluded to my visit and some of the faithful intervened, dialoguing with him.

Then, at my request, the assembly prayed for the sick. These knelt in the middle of the circle, three women and a man, and were asked to describe their maladies. The assembly sang two hymns, with closed eyes, and the founder began to pray in a violent tone, in the grip of strong agitation, but with his eyes always closed. Then he imposed his hands on the sick. The other religious leaders present also prayed in the same way but in a lower tone, while the faithful manifested the presence of the Holy Spirit within them by groans and sighs. Then the singing began again, all keeping their eyes closed.

A final prayer and some songs brought the meeting to a close. After the end of the service one of the religious leaders who had not spoken until then wanted to begin to preach and, in spite of the efforts of his colleagues to prevent him, he succeeded in speaking for a few minutes.

The principal characteristics of the cult are, more than in any of the older African churches, the spontaneity and flexibility of ritual and the importance accorded individual initiative. Dialogue can take place at any time between the leaders of the community and the congregation, and each can express himself in the way that best suits him while remaining within the framework of the ceremony.

In addition to worship properly so called, the African churches hold out to their faithful exceptional meetings, more or less frequent, depending on events. In the Legio these meetings are one of the principal features of the church in the district and they periodically bring together the faithful of all the communities. On the roads and paths, you often meet a dozen or so men and women all dressed up,

some with a crucifix as a marching standard, others with a small pack of provisions on their heads, walking in procession and singing hymns and songs. They are delegates from some community going to a meeting, sometimes as far as twenty miles away from their homes. The meeting is comprised of several parts, beginning with the rosary, as at Sunday worship, while waiting for everybody to arrive. Then Mass is said with many manifestations of the Spirit. These are all the more numerous because the faithful present are the most active in their own communities. Then come songs set to traditional melodies, alternating with Catholic hymns, prayer for the sick, and collective exorcisms. Some begin to speak in tongues, others prophesy, still others fall into ecstasy. At night a meal is prepared from the provisions which each has brought and then the meeting goes on with discussions and singing around the fire until a late hour.

It was during such a meeting that Gallus Ochieng', the founder of the Legio community at Kirogo, was converted. "Simeo had just come from prison and the meeting took place to celebrate his return. The members of the Legio were kneeling in a row reciting the rosary. Then the evil spirits began to cry out saying that they were leaving those whom they possessed. Some cried out as they were leaving and were told to go right to hell. Others groaned, saying that they could not leave their little daughter or their little son. Others declared that they wanted their cow, their goat, their possessions consecrated. When I saw what a few Hail Marys could do for people, I was converted."

Other churches founded earlier hold such gatherings only on special occasions such as annual feasts like Christmas and Easter, the anniversary of the death of a founder, for meetings with an official of the district to resolve some problem which extends beyond the reach of the community, for the visit of the priest or pastor to baptize catechumens, for a Revival mission.

For occasions such as these the faithful of a movement come together from all the communities in the district, sometimes to the number of two hundred. In addition to the

ceremony which is the objective of the meeting, each church organizes entertainments on the model of its cult and a meal in common is taken at the end of the day. These meetings play an important role. Periodically the most active members of different communities get together, renew their ideals and their enthusiasm, and reaffirm their unity in the faith. Deprived of these occasions, local communities suffocate and lose contact with an evolving society.

Worship is the religious activity none dispense with except for grave reasons. Attending worship or not determines whether church membership is real or nominal. The census made of the faithful of the African churches was based on attendance at weekly service and participation in the construction of a place of worship.

Worship is by nature an act in common. It brings together the local members of the chosen people to pray to God who has revealed the way of salvation to them. Each can pray at home but it seems that to attain the fullness of religious experience it is necessary to share in communal activities.

Further, worship responds to psychological and social imperatives for the faithful. It is an occasion for relaxing, for moving outside the family framework, for forgetting for a few hours the problems and tensions of daily life. For women especially, after a week of hard work, the day reserved for prayer is a day of rest, dedicated to recreative activities, offering diversion and emotional and nervous release. The young take the opportunity to rival one another in propriety and elegance. In the group, too, the individual acquires a new personality, a new status, which often compensate for a situation of inferiority in the family cadre, and for social and economic defeat. In worshipping, all find themselves in a fraternal atmosphere in which the exaltation of sharing the same faith and of expressing it strongly allows them to forget the dissensions and problems of existence.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Sacraments*

The sacraments,<sup>4</sup> like weekly worship, are rites borrowed from the missionary churches. They are practices designed to

procure or to develop grace in those who perform them. Sacraments can be of divine or human institution and often need the mediation of a specialist. What distinguishes a sacrament from other cult acts is its automatic character. Provided that certain conditions of form and substance are fulfilled, grace comes of necessity to him who asks for it.

The tendency among the African churches has been to preserve the spirit rather than the letter of the sacraments borrowed from the mother church. Ritual is generally simplified to the essential (water for baptism, imposition of hands for confirmation) and often adapted to local circumstances.

*Baptism and Confirmation.* Baptism, the sign of conversion and salvation, is the most important sacrament in the eyes of the faithful both in the missionary and in the African churches. Conflict between them on this point is particularly acute, for most of the missionary churches refuse baptism to polygamous men and their wives, require a long preliminary period of theoretical study, and ask for a money gift for its administration. These three points often form the basis for the African churches' criticism of the missionaries. It should be emphasized that criticism is more often directed at men than at institutions. The principal difference between baptism in missionary and African churches, however, concerns the very significance of the act. For the missionary churches, baptism saves the individual; for the African churches, it introduces the initiate into an earthly as well as a spiritual community. This explains why the faithful who change from one church to another receive baptism again, sometimes even for a third time, since their search for salvation proves the nullity of their former conversions. In the Legio and the A.C.L., however, baptism received in the Catholic Church is recognized as valid, for both these groups consider themselves as part of the Catholic Church and insist on the similarity existing between their rituals and those of the mother church.

The conversion of Owinyo Maraga of the Roho community at Olando expresses this idea of baptism: "I was saved three times from death by the grace of God. The first time I

fell from a very tall tree, on striking the ground I rolled over three times but I was not hurt. Later on I was beaten and left for dead but I survived. I was beaten another time and, in spite of three broken ribs, I recovered. I became a member of the Roho Church in 1946. Before that I had tried the Israel Church and the Pentecostals and had received baptism each time. After being baptized again in the Roho Church, I nevertheless fell back into sin, drinking beer and smoking Indian hemp, and I began to pray in other churches. At last God gave me in prayer the grace to recognize my sins and to be delivered from them."

Each church has its own baptismal rites. At the beginning, Simeo Ondeto sent his faithful to be baptized at the Catholic mission after he had delivered them from the evil spirits which tormented them. Since the priests refused to baptize them on the spot without preliminary instruction, Simeo began to baptize himself and delegated this power to some of his disciples. With the development of his movement and its growing conflict with the Catholic Church, a special ritual was worked out, beginning with the Catholic model. The idea was to remain within tradition and at the same time "to do better." Formulas, vows renouncing sin and Satan, improvisations and extensions were multiplied to the point of almost eclipsing the essential. The culminating point of the ritual, however, remains the pouring of the water. The newly baptized, seized by the Spirit on contact with the water, then manifest violently the grace acting on them. They fall to the ground in convulsions, cry out, and speak in tongues. Girpas Wayoga, the bishop, states that, "When one of the faithful receives baptism he is told that a gift is accorded him by the Holy Spirit: some become 'sin detectors,' others are capable of finding hidden magical objects, others receive the power of expelling devils." He himself received the gift of preaching. The baptism of the Legio is at present called "the baptism of our Lady" or "wings to fly."

In the Roho Church, a priest comes from Kenya to baptize. He dresses in a white robe and stole. The catechumens, too, dress in white and must be old enough to ask

for baptism themselves. For children, the consent of their parents is not necessary, but very young children are not baptized. Baptism is given by triple aspersion and the formula pronounced in the "revealed" language. The day of my visit there were six catechumens. When the priest poured water on one woman's head, she fell into convulsions and began to speak in tongues. After having baptized six people, one of whom was a little girl of ten, the priest sprinkled the assembly with the water that remained, thus provoking manifestations of the Spirit—groans, signs, incoherent language. The only difference between the major and minor branches of the Church is in the baptismal formula, which is recited in Luo in the minor branch. In both branches, baptism is preceded by a public confession by the catechumens, who solemnly swear to renounce sin. After the ceremony the community prays for the newly baptized.

In the Nomyia Church baptism is also done by aspersion but only in the name of the Father, since the divinity of Jesus is not recognized. It too is preceded by public confession and renunciation of sin. This confession is the first and the last. With baptism sin is wiped off the soul of the new initiate and he can no longer commit evil. According to the teaching of Johanes Oalo, the founder, the baptism of men should be followed by their circumcision. In fact, few Luo consent to it, as it is a Bantu custom.

In the Israel Church, the pastor baptizes without water by a simple imposition of hands. Very young children can be baptized as a sign of their membership in the community, but once they become adults they should have themselves baptized again after conversion and confession followed by a period of instruction and probation.<sup>5</sup>

In churches of the Johera type the same elements are found—public confession, renunciation of sin, pouring of water. The essential difference between these churches and the Legio type consists in the reaction of their faithful, who do not give themselves up to external manifestations of the Spirit within them. By way of an example, here is a description of a baptism in a Pentecostal Church which took



place in the Mawe community near Tatwe. The celebration lasted the whole day and brought together more than two hundred people from all the communities of the district.

The faithful assembled slowly. The first arrivals crowded together in the local chapel where the religious leaders were. One of them was a young man who had just returned from a trip to Canada where he had gone to study under the auspices of the Pentecostal mission of Kenya. The meeting began with some lively songs directed by two women. Then, after a short prayer, the dignitaries were presented to the congregation. One of them, James, the Pastor of Shirati, intoned a chant which was taken up by the assembly.

Delegates from all the communities arrived one after another in little groups, singing and carrying flags. The faithful gathered in the chapel went out to welcome them, while the twenty-four catechumens who were going to be baptized remained inside to have their names registered. Then the catechumens in their turn went outside and the whole assemblage went down the hill towards the river several miles distant. A group of about sixty women with flags headed the procession, starting it off with the kind of singing and dancing that marks a marriage. The one who directed the songs made them repeat a refrain celebrating the return of the young man, interspersed with Alleluias: "Olanjo has returned from America, alleluia! He came back from America on an airplane, alleluia!"

We arrived at the river bank where a sandy beach led down to a bathing pond especially hollowed out for baptisms, which are done by immersion according to the Pentecostal rite. Songs, prayers, and sermons followed one after another for nearly an hour. Then while the faithful on the river bank sang, the twenty-four catechumens were plunged into the water by two of the leaders. Coming out, they ran to a nearby farm to change their wet clothing. The rest of the assembly followed and went up towards the chapel, always under the leadership of a group of women who sang and danced at the head.

The faithful began to reassemble in the chapel but it soon

became apparent that it could not hold them all, so the meeting was transferred to a place under a big tree not far away. Songs, prayers, and three preachers followed one after the other. The ceremony concluded with a monster collection. Two groups were formed to see which one would give more money. The congregation sang, danced, shouted, yelled itself hoarse with megaphones, and the two groups each grabbed the flag every time that they surpassed the other in their total contribution. After a final song, the faithful dispersed in small groups to eat, then all went to their own homes.

In other churches of the Johera type, baptism is less spectacular. In the Johera Church itself it is administered as in the Anglican Church, by the pastor with aspersion in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Very young children can be baptized just like adults.

In the Fweny Mar Lam Church, the faithful gather to pray and sing together and all those who want to be baptized must first confess their sins and promise not to fall back into their errors. The community prays for them, and they receive baptism as a sign of their conversion. In pouring the water on their head the priest says: "We place on your forehead the sign of the cross. We admit you among God's other sheep. From this day forward, you are pledged to be God's soldiers. Beginning today you give up evil and do the work of God."

In the same way the Warrouk Church considers baptism as a sign of salvation obtained through the confession of sins. The preacher of the Kiterere community near Ingri gave a sermon on the theme, "Everybody is saved by Jesus and to be saved everybody must confess his sins. . . He who is not saved cannot be baptized. . . You feel in your soul that you ought to submit to the word of God; then, if you are saved, you feel the desire to speak out before all. . ." Baptism is given in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But the baptismal name is a Luo name. "Why take a European name belonging to somebody you don't know?" Very young children cannot receive baptism. They are blessed with an imposition of hands and if their parents

are saved so are they. "When someone wants to be baptized, he is taught the way of God, the manner in which the Holy Spirit can come into the soul, and the word of God. Those who are already saved propose the name of the postulants to the priest after they have publicly confessed their sins and renounced evil."

The examples just given show that baptism is less a condition for salvation than a sign of it. Grace is received only if the postulant sincerely confesses his sins and renounces evil. This is why a man can be baptized several times until he is really converted. Baptism does not act *ex opere operato* but only in the measure in which it is accompanied by real interior renewal. The criterion for conversion is the respect shown the principles of the church as they are practiced in the community that welcomes the new initiate. Good and evil are defined concretely in relation to the community: whoever makes himself a part of it and conforms to its practices is automatically on the way to salvation. Inversely, if the new initiate does not respect the law of the group, there is neither conversion nor salvation for him.

Although baptism marks the entrance of the faithful into the community of the elect, the majority of African churches prescribe confirmation for access to the fullness of the Spirit. There are few variations in the ritual, which always take place by the imposition of hands on each postulant, either by the bishop or the priest depending on the case. Only the Nomyia Church does not practice confirmation, replacing it theoretically by the circumcision of men.

*Ordination.* Most of the churches have a special ceremony for the consecration of ministers both for spiritual reasons and for considerations of hierarchical control. The bishop's most important function is to consecrate priests: Mataio Ajouga was elected head of the Johera Church just for that purpose; and all new movements possess at least one such personage, either the founder himself or men appointed by him.

For the hierarchy this function is all the more important

because it represents the only means of exercising any control whatsoever over local communities. If the bishop cannot always choose priests and much less impose them on communities against their will, he can at least control their formation.

In the Legio, young men of the North Mara district who want to become priests generally spend a certain time on the farm of the local priest, helping him in the fields. At Siruka, there were two of them in 1966. Afterwards, if they know how to read, and the bishop is in agreement, they spend a year on his farm in order to learn their calling. At Rabuor there was one who helped the local priest, was learning to say Mass, and exercising the functions of a deacon. When they are ready, the bishop consecrates them and either sends them into a parish that has asked for them or simply has them go back to their homes, where they perform their functions privately, soon gathering a little congregation around them. It seems that the system may be different in Kenya and that young men are received into a seminary at Kisumu but about that I have no precise information.

In the oldest and best-organized churches, the Roho, Johera, and Pentecostal, stages of formation are provided for those who wish to become pastors or simply lay leaders, with the length of formation varying according to the rank aspired to. Pastors formed in this way are few and are considered by the faithful as men of the hierarchy whose role is essentially sacramental. In that case it is the lay leaders who are the real heads of the local communities; even if they have received a formation of some weeks, this is not enough to detach them from their environment.

In all cases, however, the priesthood is first of all a vocation and in default of consecration by a bishop, its attributes can be conferred directly by the Holy Spirit, as in the cases of Marcellianus Orongo, founder and priest of the A.C.L., and of Joel, a priest of the minor branch of the Roho Church. A man who feels himself called to the ministry sets about preaching without waiting for official consecration, without passing through any period of formation, even

without restricting himself to one particular church. If he finds a group that suits him and can give him the status and function he seeks, he can begin to baptize and to drive out devils independently, just on faith in the words of the Gospel: go, baptize, drive out devils, cure the sick in my name. There are two ways of becoming a priest: by integration into a hierarchy that forms and directs the candidate and assures him of a place in the apparatus; and by direct consecration by the Holy Spirit, who inspires the words and actions of those he chooses and confers special powers on them.

*Marriage.* As has already been remarked, the sacrament of marriage as practiced in the Catholic Church meets with very little success among the Luo and, according to different informants, the Legio and the A.C.L., which keep exactly the same form, have not yet celebrated one.

The other churches of the Legio type have tried to Christianize the customary marriage and integrate it into the religious and social life of the community. In the Roho Church, for example, the faithful gather in the house of the young man and pray; later, when half of the dowry has been handed over, the elders of the community and the father of the young man go to seek the young woman at her father's farm and conduct her to her husband's farm. In the Nomyia Church, when the first head of dowry cattle have been remitted to the young woman's father, the faithful gather in chapel to pray. They then betake themselves to the young man's farm and then go off to find the young woman and bring her to her husband's home.

In churches of the Johera type too each has its own version of Christianized Luo marriage. In the Pentecostal Assemblies, when two young people belonging to the same church are engaged, the young man must inform the elders and eventually the pastor. The date of the marriage is then set for two or three months later and the dowry of cattle, or at least a portion of it, is handed over. Traditionally, payment is extended over a period of several years. On the day set the young woman is customarily carried off by her

fiancé and her friends<sup>6</sup> and brought to the church, where the marriage is consecrated by the prayers of the elders and the community.

All the African churches, with the exception of the Nomyia Church—which gives the practice complete approval—look on polygamy with toleration but not as the ideal. A marriage in church or before the community, therefore, means a monogamous marriage. It is interesting to learn that the African churches, thought by many to owe their success to their toleration of polygamy, have really had a limiting influence on it. In fact, social pressure is more easily exercised in a small group and Christian ideals embodied in the local community are able to oppose effectively the pressure of the family milieu. He who takes a second wife is not excommunicated, but he incurs a diminution of prestige and, in most cases, he cannot exercise any public religious function such as preaching or imposing hands on the sick.

Marriage as practiced in the African churches offers certain important advantages for the Luo. First of all, the ceremony is tied to the customary stages of marriage, particularly the handing over of the dowry and the forms followed in establishing the young woman in her husband's home. It is the community that goes out of its way to pray as often as necessary in order to Chrisitanize the different stages of marriage. Then the flexibility of the notion of marriage allows a young man to let the consecration of the union go with a good conscience, not taking on obligations which he knows will be difficult to fulfill in a family milieu still steeped in tradition. But, on the other hand, a celebration in the presence of the assembled community guarantees respect for the contract and confers a certain prestige on monogamy, from now on considered as the ideal.<sup>7</sup>

*Penance.* Confession can be private, as in the Legio and the A.C.L., which follow the Catholic rite; it can be public, as in all the other African churches.

In the Legio and the A.C.L. confession takes place before Mass in the church or in a separate hut if the faithful are saying the rosary. Confession is required only of those who

wish to communicate. The priest hears their sins and gives them absolution. This is a rite of purification but it is not entirely efficacious as the "sin detector" can still send away from communion someone who comes from confession but does not have perfect contrition.

In the Nomyia Church confession of sins takes place only once, at the time of conversion before baptism. While the assembly sings, at the time of weekly worship, for example, each catechumen can stand up and publicly avow his sins. Once conversion is consecrated by baptism, all the actions of the faithful are inspired by God and they can no longer do evil and any subsequent confession is useless.

In the other churches, confession can and ought to be repeated as often as possible. It is not always spontaneous. In the Roho and Israel Churches, it often takes place in the form of responding to accusations. In the Roho Church community at Tatwe, the wife of the local catechist has the power of detecting the sins on the souls of the faithful. During the service at which I assisted, she accused an old man of being a *jajouk* (the local bogeyman) and of walking around at night to frighten solitary passersby. The man rejected the accusation violently. On the other hand, she accused another man of having quarreled with his brother about the sale of a cow and he, embarrassed, was forced to give an explanation of his conduct which amounted to admitting his culpability. There was no absolution but a prayer in common to close the debate. Confessions provoked in this way can lead to violence between accused and accusers but can also, in the case of public offenses, "lance the abscess" and establish peace in a community.

In churches of the Johera type confession also exists as a preliminary to baptism and a sign of conversion. The moment of sincere public confession, consecrated by the prayer of the community, marks the passage from the state of sin to the state of grace. Confession is the exit from the empire of evil, baptism the entrance into the community of the elect.

Confession can, nevertheless, be repeated by the baptized faithful each time that they fall back into their errors. In the

Johera and Fweny Mar Lam churches, it takes place during prayer meetings connected with weekly worship or some exceptional occasion. During the preaching each can stand up and publicly avow his faults. A prayer is said for the penitent and the sermon continues.

In the Pentecostal Assemblies, confession takes place at the end of the service at the same time as prayer for the sick and exorcism. At a service which I attended in the community of Kogaja near Tatwe, the leader of the ceremony invited all those who wished to come forward: "We are going to sing a hymn and during this time all those who entertain bad feelings towards another, all who have enemies, who are sick, or troubled by evil spirits can draw near to have us pray for them." Then he enumerated a list of sins that the faithful could have committed. A hymn was sung with the refrain, "Blood of Jesus, save us." But only one young woman came forward and the leader repeated, "Come, all you who suffer, and we will pray for you." Then some others came forward and began to tell about their problems.

A man: "I am kneeling here because in my heart I am always getting angry and this anger might lead me to kill, with a club or whatever thing might be at hand."

An old man: "My body gives me much trouble. I feel sick all the time."

A woman: "An evil spirit torments me and keeps me from eating certain fish."

Another woman (wife of the first penitent): "I am always getting angry."

A woman with a little child: "My child is sick. Pray for him."

A young woman: "I have a sore hand." She wore a necklace of plastic beads and the leaders made her take it off saying that the beads could serve as a magic charm and so counteract the effect of Christian prayer. The young woman added that she was a Catholic and that she had come because she knew that all Christians adored the same God. "That is why I came here for you to pray for me and cure me of this suffering."



The leaders then divided the sufferers into three groups. The sick were attended to first. While the faithful sang and clapped their hands, each of the leaders<sup>8</sup> made his own prayer and imposed his hands with considerable force on the forehead of the sick. The second group, the sinners, received similar treatment. The leaders prayed: "O Jesus, take anger from these people! You know that anger is the root of sin. Make their souls clear, their heads clear, and take from them the desire to do evil to another." Then the woman who had complained of an evil spirit was the object of a special treatment which will be described later on in the chapter.

There exist, then, two forms of the sacrament of penance. One is a stage in conversion and precedes baptism. The other is reserved to faithful members of the community and makes it possible for them, when they have succumbed to their old temptations, to return to the state of grace with the prayerful help of the community. On the other hand, it seems to me difficult to separate the notions of penitence and sin. We have seen how, in connection with doctrine, evil was defined in relation to what threatened the group in any manner whatsoever. Penitence then consists in establishing peace between the penitent and the community. This can be done by reconciliation with those he has offended or for whom he represents a potential danger. It can be done, too, by reaffirmation of his adherence to the norms of the group. This is why it is indispensable for the whole community to participate in the sacrament.

*Communion.* The Christian form of communion is sharing a sacred meal in memory of Jesus. This sacrament has met with little success in the African churches and plays a very small role in their liturgy.

In the Legio and the A.C.L. there are rarely more than one or two communions at Sunday Mass. First of all, the substratum of the sacrament, the host, is a product difficult to obtain for it means bribing someone who works at the mission to procure it. Furthermore, the very strict conditions which must be fulfilled by those who desire to communicate effectively limit the number of participants. They must wear

white robes, confess before Mass, and pass the examination of the "sin detector" at the time of communion. In these two churches, the Eucharist is the sacrament for the elect, reserved to a very few saintly elite, as a special gift of God which only they are capable of receiving. It is therefore a sacrament addressed to a few chosen individuals and not to the community. In fact its individualistic character is such that it finishes by not existing at all and by being entirely suppressed in the liturgy: the Legio priest at Rabuor made all the gestures of the Mass with a crucifix instead of a host and an empty chalice.

In the other churches the Eucharist, if it exists, is rarely celebrated. The Nomyia Church, which does not recognize the divinity of Jesus, has no communion rite. The Roho Church considers the Eucharist as a meal: "Jesus asked his faithful to celebrate his feast by sharing a meal," stated the catechist of the Olando community. The consecration must be effected by the priest. The bread is replaced by a cake made of wheat flour and eggs and the wine by orange juice.<sup>9</sup> In principle, communion takes place every three months on big feasts, if a priest is available; but as a matter of fact, as there is no resident priest in Tanzania for the major branch of the Church, the rite is not even celebrated on the rare occasions when it is prescribed. In the Warrouk Church communion takes place once a month with bread and soda. The faithful who are "saved"—that is, those who have publicly confessed their sins—are authorized to participate. The Pentecostal Assemblies and the Johera Church celebrate the Eucharist with bread (or crackers) and wine, when it is possible to procure these and when a pastor is in the region at the right time—that is, rarely. Finally, the Fweny Mar Lam Church has no special rite of communion for, the leaders say, the faithful commune with one another in prayer and all then feel themselves to be children of God.

Whether a communal or an individual sacrament, communion plays an unimportant role in the life of the African churches.<sup>10</sup> In so far as direct union with God is concerned, rituals that allow the faithful to go into ecstasy obtain a

much more intense experience of the presence of the Spirit. Insofar as it is a matter of the union of community members in God, other activities in common, such as singing and dancing, evoke and confirm unity more efficaciously. Communion is therefore attained through other forms. In fact, the reception of the Holy Spirit and ecstasy are manifestations induced by divine grace and are generally produced during the course of rites especially organized for that end. These rites correspond, therefore, to the definition given for sacramental acts. For example, the dance with drum accompaniment practiced in the Roho and Israel churches constitutes the culminating point of the service during which the faithful can be seized by the Spirit and corresponds, in my opinion, to the Eucharist. Each unites a group characterized by physical proximity and by sharing in the same object as a bearer of grace. Whether the object is a piece of bread or the rhythm of drums, there is, in both cases, "communion" in the same act and the same abandonment to the Spirit. Doubtless there is matter for discussion here but the sacramental character of these practices seems sufficiently clear according to the definition given.

The sacraments of the African churches are community actions or they cease to exist. When the individualistic idea of the sacraments is maintained, or when the priest alone plays an active role in their administration, as in the Legio or the A.C.L., the sacraments fall into disuse: this is the case with marriage, the Eucharist, and private confession. The sacramental acts that hold an important place in the life of the African churches all call for the active participation of the community: baptism, public confession, prayer for the sick (about which more will be said), and even holy orders, for the vocation of the priest must be confirmed not only by the bishop but also by a group of the faithful. If the sacraments are a source of grace, the individual benefits from them insofar as he is integrated in the community and, if a specialist is often necessary for the administration of the sacramental sign, it is the community that is the real intermediary between God and man.

*The Warfare with Evil*

The warfare with evil is one of the fundamental themes of the African churches and holds a big place in their religious activities.

In the traditional religion, evil was everything that came to interrupt the ordered and harmonious course of life as God had created it. The disturbing agents were also those to whom people turned to restore and renew the vital cycle.

In the Christian conception taken up by the African churches, evil is not occasional: it is everywhere and rules the world. But God has given his children the power to protect themselves and to remedy evil without having recourse to the agents that cause it—ancestors, spirits of nature, magicians, sorcerers. Thanks to the revelation we have received and to the instruments of salvation sent by God to his faithful, men can hereafter triumph over the powers of evil without having to conciliate them or to fear their vengeance.

*Law and Prohibitions.* The first aspect of the battle with evil springs from its nature as being external to man. He is first of all a victim, and if he himself causes evil, it is under the influence of wicked powers which take hold of him and force him. His only refuge is in the observance of the divine law as it is enunciated and practiced in the church, that is, in the local community. The law of the church has a threefold object: to define sin, to protect the faithful from the stains and taints of evil, and to recognize sinners.

For churches of the Legio type, the distinction between sinners and elect goes so far as to include clothing. Men and women wear long robes, half or full length, either white or of a solid color, like the saints and religious in pious pictures. Embroidered emblems are reminders of the church to which they belong: the Legio, Israel, or Roho (a red cross on a white background next to an "S" for *sandrouk*, that is, "redemption"). Members of the Legio wear clothes of a characteristic cut with an official collar and a little cape covering the shoulders, rather like a religious habit. The women wear religious veils or a simple knotted scarf; the

men, a Moslem fez or a flowing veil such as we see in biblical pictures.

It is in the Legio that wearing a religious costume is most widespread and is accompanied by numerous accessories, chaplets of different lengths around neck and wrist, a St. Andrew's cross or a staff in the form of a cross, a crucifix stuck in the girdle. In other churches, wearing a uniform is more indicative of membership in the movement than of a desire to be distinguished from the world, and young women sometimes use it as an occasion for elegance: they keep their white robe carefully put away in a chest during the week and dress up in it, freshly washed and ironed, for worship. Thus the wearing of a special garment expresses not only a desire for purity in a perverted world but also the cohesion of a group of elect who are known to one another and look upon themselves as a living testimony of salvation.

There are other ways of showing publicly that one belongs to the group. The Roho and Israel churches are fond of processions in costume with flags and drums to accompany their songs and dances. Most of the churches of the Legio kind also have a special form of greeting, as does the Warrouk Church of the Johera type. When two members of the Legio meet one another, they kneel facing one another and recite a prayer terminated with a big sign of the cross, after which they can greet each other in the traditional Luo fashion. In the Warrouk Church, the faithful recite a short prayer with closed eyes before shaking hands effusively. In the Roho Church people greet each other with the word "peace" without shaking hands "because of harmful substances which kill people, and because your grace can leave you if you shake hands with somebody who has touched such a substance, even if accidentally."

In churches of the Johera type, however, there exists no external sign of belonging to the group. The faithful can wear a white garment if they wish but there is no official uniform, except for members of the clergy when exercising their functions and even this is left to the free interpretation of

each in consideration of the means available. External symbolism is characteristic of churches of the Legio type.

If it is not always indispensable to give physical evidence of belonging to a group of the elect and of rejecting evil, all the churches are agreed, however, on the necessity for a clear definition of sin and of the divine law. Sin is everything that harms a man or a community, sin is the step by which a man gives evil entry into himself or into the group through his instrumentality. The divine law is, therefore, presented as the sum of prohibitions and obligations that are prophylactic principles meant to prevent contamination. The stronger the sense of the presence of evil in the world, the longer the list of prohibitions and obligations.

Churches of the Legio type, which show by their costume a great concern for purity, also have the greatest wealth of prohibitions, while churches of the Johera type limit themselves to a minimum. Except for the A.C.L., which imposes no rule of life on its adherents, all the others agree in forbidding their faithful to indulge in tobacco, alcohol, dancing, and all traditional religious and medicinal practices whatsoever.

Tobacco is, in fact, compared to Indian hemp, which, smoked in a pipe, apparently has hallucinatory properties and sends initiates into uncontrolled fits of violence. Likewise, beer made from grain, an inoffensive thing in itself, is often distilled in order to make a sort of raw "elixir of life" extremely noxious because of the defective process used in distilling it. People drink it in considerable quantities to the detriment of their health and the well-being of their families. Dancing is connected with those evening parties organized by the young from farm to farm, at which the sexual prohibitions between members of the same clan and even of the same lineage are transgressed and the honor of young girls is lost. The guitar, the principal musical instrument used at these parties and brought in by Westerners, has become the symbol of moral corruption.<sup>11</sup> The comment of Musa Ondiek, assistant to the founder of Fweny Mar Lam Church,

expresses well the attitude of the African churches regarding these three major vices: "Formerly people knew how to drink a reasonable quantity of beer, but today they drink too much and that is why God now forbids it. Likewise, when a man or a woman smokes tobacco, they think of nothing else: when he prays, he is thinking of tobacco; when he meets people, he asks them for tobacco." If the African churches forbid their faithful to use these products, it is because they make them strangers to one another, dangerous for the community, and deaf to the voice of God.

Practices bound up with traditional religion and medicine and connected with commerce with evil spirits are forbidden to the faithful as well. We have seen how the spirits of the dead are rejected together with the demons; likewise funeral ceremonies are put in the category of "pagan" rites to which a Christian cannot expose himself without sinning, while herb-doctoring is classified with magic and sorcery. The wearing of amulets is forbidden the faithful and every object of a magical nature must be relinquished and even destroyed when someone wishes to receive baptism: this is part of conversion.

The day I attended a baptismal ceremony in the Pentecostal community of Mawe, the preacher recounted the following story: "One day a man received baptism. He had just been baptized and he wanted to come out of the water but, in spite of his efforts, his feet would not budge. Then he acknowledged before the congregation that he had an amulet tied around his waist. After the one who was baptizing him removed this, he was able to come out of the water."

When the faithful or even people who do not belong to the community ask for prayers or to be exorcised they are first made to produce the magical objects which they are using and to take off all amulets worn supposedly for decorative purposes only but which can, notwithstanding, conceal a charm. Later on more will be said in regard to prayer for the sick and exorcism.

The four kinds of fundamental prohibitions apply in all the churches except for the A.C.L., which does not forbid

tobacco, beer, or dancing, since the Catholic Church, by which it is inspired, does not. But churches of the Legio type have still other rules.

Prohibitions about food, for example, are numerous. Thus in the Legio certain vegetables are not eaten: *dek* because it grows in the yard of the farm and has within it the spirits of the dead who have been buried in front of the door of the house; *bo* because its fiber is used to tie the umbilical cord of the newborn and because it is the principal vegetable eaten by Europeans (?) and could therefore poison Africans.

Certain fish and meats are also judged impure or dangerous according to Luo tradition or according to the Bible: animals that have died of old age or illness or were strangled, blood, fish without scales. Members of the Legio do not eat meat on Friday to mark their opposition to the degenerate religion preached by the missionaries of our day. Likewise, goat meat cannot be eaten, for this animal is often dedicated to spirits and is associated with numerous pagan traditions, notably, the cult of Mumbo, which makes it unclean for Christians.

Still other prohibitions are met with. Three churches, the Legio, Roho, and Israel, require their faithful to remove their shoes before entering the place of worship as a sign of humility—a custom recognizably due to Islamic influence. In certain Legio communities, it is forbidden to enter a place of worship carrying money: at Siruka, for example, the offering is made before Mass at the door of the church on a square of ground especially reserved for this function. Two churches, the Legio and Roho, forbid all contact with Western medicine and authorize curing by prayer alone. As a matter of fact, I have met members of the Legio in the hospital at Shirati and when I was on a visit to the community of Olando the wife of a high dignitary of the Roho Church guardedly asked me to procure her some aspirin.

In churches of the Johera type, on the contrary, Western medicine is much appreciated, in spite of the importance accorded prayer for the sick, which is at the same time a first and last resort. In the Fweny Mar Lam Church it plays an



important role: the brother of Musa Ondiek is a hospital attendant in Kenya and when he comes to visit Musa he makes use of the opportunity to take care of the members of the community. Musa himself told me: "He gives them injections, like the Mennonites, for when people are sick they must take care of themselves. If it is a spirit that makes them sick, we have to pray. If it is an injury, it has to be tended."

The prohibitions of all the churches have not been recounted in detail. It is possible to group them in three categories. Some correspond to customs inspired by tradition or by the Bible or are borrowed from other movements. Their value cannot be called into question. Examples of these are prohibitions concerning food and the requirement to remove shoes before entering a place of worship. Some have an objective immediately recognizable to those who respect them and their transgression has directly harmful effects, for example, the use of Indian hemp and alcohol. Finally, some are associated with a particular phase in the life of a movement when it is trying to define itself in relation to the mother church, to traditional society, and to the modern world. The rejection of all traditional practices and of modern medicine provides examples.

Through prohibitions and requirements, members of the African churches seek to distinguish themselves at the same time from the "pagan" world of their ancestors, which for them represents poverty and weakness in the face of Western wealth and power, and from the modern world in its incomprehensible and destructive aspects, expressed in debauchery, drunkenness, drugs, and oppression. The respect for the divine law enunciated by the founder is a means of protection for the faithful. The community, which incarnates the law, is at the same time the guarantor for the worth of its practices. Whoever conforms to them is protected from outside deleterious influences by belonging to the group. The existence of the community makes it possible for individuals to resist the pressures of their milieu in order to lead a life different from the average. The desire to be part of the community of the elect, represented on the local level by the

local community, also warrants the efforts of the faithful to conform to the law of the church. The external symbols of belonging to the group and the practices accompanying them have meaning only in the measure in which they are based on a social structure. Inversely, the success and dynamism of a group depend on the feeling of identity that it succeeds in developing among its members.

*Prayer for the Sick.* Separating oneself from "the world" in the New Testament sense, from everything outside the Kingdom, even belonging to the group within the Kingdom does not suffice to escape from malignant influences. For man remains subject to all sorts of attacks, maladies, possessions, persecutions. One of the principal activities of the African churches consists in battling different forms of evil.

In the traditional society, evil could only be overcome thanks to techniques of specialists capable of determining its causes and remedies. The great innovation of Christianity in this domain is that God has given the faithful, directly or through the mediation of a savior, the means of fighting evil forces. Like Jesus and his apostles in the New Testament, the members of the African churches heal sicknesses and drive out demons. Prayer for the sick, a supplication addressed to God, is distinguished from exorcism by its contingent character. Although victory over the lower spirits is guaranteed by recourse to the divine name, one cannot force God to grant a cure to the sick; sometimes it is necessary to pray again and again before prayer is answered. Nevertheless, in spite of the uncertainty of the outcome, it plays an important role in all the African churches, which consider it as one of their principal duties and one of their most successful means of recruitment.

Two kinds of prayer for the sick can be distinguished. The first is related to conversion and entrance into the community. Sins that the faithful confess publicly before receiving baptism are often associated with physical evils, and these evils disappear at the time of confession when the assembled community prays for the new initiate. Becoming a

child of God, he escapes the grasp of his malady, even if this improvement is only temporary and disappears when his initial enthusiasm wanes. But more often the cure preceding conversion is the cause of it: because the prayers of the community have relieved his troubles, the sick person confesses his sins publicly and has himself baptized. The story of Christina Akinyi, who became a member of the Legio after her cure, has already been told. Another woman, Agnes Maranda, of the Siruka *gweng'*, who was first a Catholic, was converted to the Pentecostal Church after having been cured by the prayers of the Tatwe community. Such examples are numerous. But whether the cure follows or precedes conversion, it is associated with a change of life and renunciation of sin.

The second type of prayer for the sick is open to all, members of the community or not, and is normally part of the activities of the church. Most communities arrange to pray for the sick at the end of the weekly service, either in the place of worship or its immediate neighborhood. Those who can come and whose complaints are mild thus benefit regularly from communal prayer. For those who cannot come, special meetings are arranged at their farms.

Prayer for the sick is, together with exorcism, one of the principal lay activities in the Legio. While the priest has a monopoly on the cult and sacramental acts, the faithful reserve to themselves techniques for contending with evil which they practice in a group under the direction of those who have received special gifts from the Holy Spirit. After the Mass that I attended in the Kowak community, prayer for the sick took place in the open space in front of the church. The faithful and the sick knelt in a circle and began by invoking the Holy Spirit with the Catholic prayer, "Come, Holy Spirit." Then the faithful in good health got up and began to recite the rosary. They went around the sick while praying and imposed hands on them, touching their rosaries to the head, shoulders, and sometimes to the affected parts of each. This circular procession lasted for about three-quarters of an hour while about twenty more of the faithful

looked on. When the rosary was finished, a final prayer was recited by one of the men who had taken part in the ceremony, and the sick got up. Then a little group of about a dozen women arranged to go to pray at a farm several miles away where their services had been requested. Members of the Legio who pray for the sick do not ask for payment. If they spend part of the day at a farm praying for someone who is unable to travel, they can be offered a meal as custom requires. As has been pointed out, the significance of prayer for the sick is less a hope for an immediate cure than a gesture of charity towards those who suffer and of reintegration into the community. One of the Legio faithful made the statement that "The sick suffer with Christ, and we ought to pray for them because of the love we should have for our brothers."

In the other churches of the Legio type, prayer for the sick also takes place after worship. After the service that I attended in the Roho community at Tatwe, we left the place of worship to go to the catechist's house to pray for the sick. The ceremony consisted of prayers by the catechist and those of the faithful who felt themselves inspired, and above all, in songs during which the faithful present imposed hands on the sick seated in the midst of them.

In churches of the Johera type, prayer for the sick is normally part of the service. We have recounted two cases, one of the Pentecostal Church and one of the Fweny Mar Lam, when speaking of worship. The principal difference between these churches and those of the Legio type in this area consists in the division of work between the faithful and the local leaders. In churches of the Legio type, the whole community participates fully in the ritual, in prayer and the imposition of hands. In those of the Johera type, on the contrary, a clear distinction is established between the assembly, which contents itself with singing and clapping hands, and the leaders, who alone make prayers of supplication and impose hands on the sick. But in both cases the presence of the community is indispensable. Like the Legio, all the churches have both a weekly ceremony of prayer for

the sick, which is part of the cult or follows immediately after it, and special seances for serious cases when the community goes to pray at the bedside of the sick or dying. This second form replaces the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. In the Legio and the A.C.L. the Catholic form, in which the priest is the sole actor, is theoretically preserved but is actually transformed into a community function in all the churches.

*Exorcism.* One of the chief reproaches made by the Luo to the missionary churches is that they pay small attention to the phenomenon of possession. According to a story current in the Legio, when Jesus expelled the demons from the Gerasene demoniac and sent them into the pigs, these threw themselves into the lake but did not drown. In fact, they swam as far as Africa and came to infest the Africans with the demons from which Jesus had delivered the Europeans. This anecdote was told me several times, especially by Leonora of the Kowak community, who had received from Simeo the power of expelling demons. She added to this: "That is why the Western missionaries do not understand the sufferings of the Africans. When we complain in confession of being tormented by an evil spirit, they answer that the spirit torments the body but not the soul and that there is no reason to be upset. However, the Gospel is clear on this point," she goes on to say, "Jesus did give his disciples the power to expel demons. If the missionaries do not use it, they are either refusing to put it at the service of Africans or they have lost it."

On the same theme, Girpas Wayoga, the Bishop, told me the following story:

The priests of the Nyarombo mission refused one day to pray for a woman who was possessed by a bad spirit and running naked in the bush. It was their advice to have her cared for in the traditional way, that is, by bathing her in water in which a magical substance had been mixed, and having her drink a potion prepared from certain plants, sacrificing a goat to the spirit and having her wear the skin of the animal. She was cared for in this way and once cured returned to church. But when at home she served her spirit and when at church she served God. Now nobody can serve two

masters. That was not good. If you ask the priests to pray in church to have a spirit expelled, when you get home the spirit returns and torments you twice as much, saying "You took me to an unpleasant place and now I want a spotless chicken (or cow, or goat) and I wish to eat it, otherwise I am going to kill you." And sometimes spirits do kill people.

Unlike the missionary churches, the African churches accord an important place to the techniques of exorcism. Manifestations of possession can be various. Among women, possession is often expressed in physical disorders: sterility, interrupted pregnancy, chronic complaints such as headaches, stomach pains, constipation. It can also be expressed, among men and women both, in deranged behavior: the spirit forces his host to act in a disordered and abnormal way: to run for no reason, to tear his clothing, to sleep in the bush, to speak in tongues. He often demands an offering, that is, the consecration of certain domestic objects or an animal; sometimes he asks for a sacrifice. In all cases of possession, however, the basic symptom is the disgust felt by the subject for some food that he formerly liked, and the sign that the patient is healed is the ability to eat this food, which the spirit forbade him to touch. I have not observed any relation between clan taboos about food and the disgust for certain foods provoked by possession. Possession differs from ordinary sickness in that it affects only certain aspects of the life of the individual, who otherwise feels quite normal. But sometimes the distinction is not so clear-cut in the minds of patients themselves: Christina Akinyi did not seem to know whether in her own case it was sickness or a spirit that caused her suffering.

The two exorcisms that will be narrated later belong to the first kind of possession, that marked by physical disorders. About the second type, the story of the wife of Elisa Ongoro, founder of the Roho community at Olando, can be told. She became insane and ran throughout the country naked, sleeping in the forest with the wild animals. He tried to have her cared for by traditional methods but without success until the day when somebody recommended that he

have her exorcised by members of the Roho Church. She was cured and the whole family were converted.

Each church has its own special techniques of exorcism but fundamentally the same phases are found in all. In the Legio, the process is as follows. First, objects consecrated to the spirit or having any magical significance whatever are gathered up and burnt before the assembled community, while the faithful kneel and recite the rosary and the Catena, the special prayers of the Catholic Legion of Mary. While prayer in common is going on, the officials place a rosary in contact with the body of the possessed: the head, neck, shoulders, and breast. The possessed goes into convulsions and begins to speak in tongues. The officials rebuke the spirit and bid him go out of the patient; the spirit answers, the dialogue goes on until, overcome by prayer, the spirit announces his departure. If the spirit refuses to go out, it is necessary to verify the fact that all objects consecrated to him have been burnt. Recalcitrant spirits are expelled with the aid of a short rosary, in which three Hail Marys replace the usual ten. It is more powerful than the traditional rosary.

If the objects consecrated to the spirit are few in number and easy to carry, the exorcism takes place in front of the church door before Mass. Otherwise, the community meets at the patient's farm. When the patient is submitted to exorcism, it is not unusual to see the spectators begin to tremble and to speak in tongues too, indicating that they too have a spirit which must be driven out. They are then submitted to the same treatment as the first patient. Sometimes the spirit returns to trouble his host after having been expelled. The members of the Legio then explain to the patient that he will have to join the community and pray for others. If the spirit then continues to manifest himself, it is because he lives in the house of the possessed person, who will have to leave it. As a result, a number of women have left their husbands' farms and live near the Legio church in order to escape the demons that torment them. In the Siruka community, there were two at the time of my visit. They were fed by the other

women of the group and passed their time visiting the sick on the neighboring farms and praying in church.

In the Nomyia Church the techniques are a little different but just as impressive. The exorcism takes place at night under a full moon in the church with the whole community gathered around the officials and the patient, all dressed in long white robes.

The ceremony at which I assisted began with singing, first at a slow rhythm then at a fast rhythm with hand clapping. The men were seated on chairs placed in a row, facing the women seated on the ground with the children and young boys and girls. In all about sixty adults were packed together in a chapel lit by two kerosene lamps. The men conducted the choir and marked the refrain by a movement of their heads and shoulders which they all did at the same time—forward, to the right, backward, and again forward. The women responded *forte*. Some got up and began to dance in place with their eyes closed and their arms extended in a gesture of supplication. The final chant lasted for twenty minutes during which the fast rhythm and the energy of the singers did not slacken for a moment. The congregation remained right up to the end under the control of the leaders: no one began to speak in tongues, danced in a wild fashion, or rolled on the ground in ecstasy. And it was in a perfectly calm voice that the priest then invited the faithful to get up and arrange themselves in a circle around him and the woman who had to be exorcised that night.

The patient sat on a mat placed on the ground. The priest, the bishop, and two assistants, a man and a woman, stood in front and on either side of her. The assembly began to sing a hymn with a very slow rhythm in an atmosphere overheated by the preceding vocal exercise. The patient began to hiccough nervously and to wail in a shrill tone. The rhythm of the singing accelerated, sustained by hand clapping. The patient was then overtaken by convulsions and began to roll on the ground. The priest and the two assistants took hold of her to keep her from escaping from the circle.



The bishop leaned over her and touched her head and shoulders with the Bible and the book written by the founder, Johanes Oalo. She writhed violently in the grasp of the assistants, who held on to her with difficulty while she screamed, sobbed, and spoke incoherently. The bishop rebuked the spirit and ordered him to leave the woman. During this time the chant of the congregation grew progressively louder to a very rapid rhythm marked by the clapping of hands and the cries of the woman.

This first phase lasted about a half hour, then the patient grew calmer little by little until the time when she stopped moving altogether, lying stretched out on the mat. The priest covered her with a white cloth and one of my neighbors whispered to me that she was dead and that when she would return to life, she would be delivered of the demon which had been tormenting her. The bishop began a prayer to which the faithful responded, asking almighty God to bring her back to life. The singing resumed and the bishop tried to revive her by bathing her feet, arms, and head with fresh water and checked from time to time whether or not her breathing and heart beats had recommenced. An interminable quarter of an hour ran out watching for a sign of life.

Then the bishop uncovered the face of the patient, took the sacred books off her breast and asked his assistant to have her sit up. Her eyes were fixed and wild. He placed the two books in her immobile hands, took a razor and cut off a few strands of hair, then passed the blade to the woman near him and she ran the razor over the patient's entire head. I asked why and was told that the woman had complained of having a spirit in her head which gave her migraines. The operation finished, the singing stopped, the bishop said a final prayer, and the patient was led out of the church. One of my neighbors told me that they were going to make her eat the food which the demon had forbidden her. The singers took up a song of thanksgiving.

In the churches of the Johera type, exorcism is also practiced but with less drama. Objects consecrated to the spirit need not be brought together and burned publicly as

the one who asks the community's help has supposedly already renounced pagan customs. For the rest, the technique is almost the same as in the Nomyia Church.

In the Pentecostal Assemblies exorcism is carried out at the end of worship, after confession and prayer for the sick. While the possessed is firmly held by several strong men, the local leaders impose hands on him and question the spirit, asking him what he wants. The patient begins to cry out and to struggle violently. In a flood of incoherent words interrupted by cries the spirit gives his name, a Luo name, and indicates why he is possessing the patient: sometimes it is an ancestor who wants to be remembered by his descendants, sometimes it is a nature spirit who wishes an object or an animal to be consecrated to him. Those officiating then enjoin the spirit, calling him by name, to leave the body of the patient in the name of Jesus. A woman who complained of not being able to eat fish because of a spirit which tormented her was exorcised with the words: "Jesus, it is you who have said that all things are possible. Alleluia! See, now drive out this spirit in your name. You, impure spirit, I command in the name of Jesus to leave this child of God. In the name of Jesus, go, go, go from here. You cannot resist Jesus who is dead on the cross for his children. Leave here. Go out in the name of Jesus. Amen." After a half-hour of resistance, during which the patient writhed and cried out, the spirit announced his departure. Then a final paroxysm marked the leave-taking of the spirit, after which the patient was completely prostrated.

In certain churches, the objects dedicated to the spirit are at once publicly burned. The same churches use sacred objects to expel the spirits: rosaries, the Bible, the book of the founder. For churches of the Johera type the invocation of the name of Jesus suffices, according to the Gospel, to drive out the most recalcitrant demons. But in all cases, the indispensable element is the presence of the community, which gives those officiating the rhythmic support necessary to force the spirit to manifest himself and then the power of prayer and faith to expel him.

*Magic and Sorcery.* A third form of evil which calls for the intervention of the African churches is the practice of magic and sorcery. But, contrary to what goes on in other regions of Africa where flushing out sorcerers has been one of the principal activities of independent movements, the churches founded among the Luo have given it only a secondary place.

The Legio is the church that pays most attention to sorcerers. Gaudencia's evangelical campaign began with the sudden death of her two children, and she directed her preaching against sorcerers and magicians. This phase of the life of the movement has not really come to much. The prestige of Simeo, who has proposed other themes to his faithful, has dimmed Gaudencia's. However, members of the Legio continue to proceed against sorcerers, as the story told me by Christopher Ogalo, a member of the Nyariwo community, clearly demonstrates.

One day we went to pray for a sick boy. But the boy's father was a *jajouk* (a sorcerer). When the prayer was finished, he slaughtered a cow to offer us a meal, hoping that we would not go into his house and stay near his son. But after the prayer, the one who was officiating and those who had the power to detect magical objects went into the father's house (the other members of the Legio did not go because they were afraid). In the house they found a jar with two big snakes in it and another containing a human head. They began to pray, then the detectors of magic opened the first jar and the snakes escaped. They beat them with their chaplets and the serpents died on the spot. When the boy's father saw what they were doing, he threw himself on them and forbade them to take the jar with the human head. Agreed, said the members of the Legio, but there is a human head inside. And they carried off a quantity of objects and magical substances which they burned outside the house. Then they went away and left the man to his anger.

Such instances are not rare: members of the Legio come to pray for a sick person or to exorcise a possessed and discover magical objects or substances<sup>12</sup> either placed there by a sorcerer to cause evil or belonging to those living on the farm themselves. But members of the Legio never attack specialists

whose powers are known to all, only those people whose activities have not been suspected before. The populace as a whole do not take this hunting out of sorcerers very seriously and are apt to make fun of the detectors of magic who are accused of bringing the "discovered" objects with them—to hide and then find them "in order to give themselves importance."<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, all the African churches denounce magicians and sorcerers as evil and forbid their faithful to have commerce with people or objects that have anything to do with the manipulation of supernatural forces by traditional methods. This is a great sin, to be confessed at the time of conversion. A Christian cannot backslide by consulting a magician or a diviner or a herb doctor and much less take up such practices himself. If he is under the domination of a spirit or of a sorcerer, he can have himself delivered by the community, thanks to confession, exorcism, prayer, and the destruction of the objects and substances in his possession.

This attitude concerns practices and things, not persons. A case in point can be found less than four hundred yards from the Roho community where there lives an old woman, the mother of Owinyo Maraga, himself a member of the community. She is a known magician. I consulted her myself and she has sundry talents: she can predict the future after having invoked the spirit which possesses her while shaking her consecrated gourds; in dreams she sees efficacious remedies for different diseases and particularly for sterility in women; she fashions charms and protective amulets, and her repertoire contains other activities. In spite of the insistence of her son, she has never been willing to abandon the practice of her art in order to join the Roho Church, with which she continues to coexist without clashing, although the Roho movement is very strict in regard to the use of magic.

The popularity which the techniques of battling with evil have with the local people, particularly prayer for the sick and exorcism, seem out of proportion to the concrete results obtained. If the desire to be cured is one of the principal

motives leading people to ask for the help of the African churches, it seems that, when no real physical relief is forthcoming, those affected content themselves with being accepted by the group and being the center of everybody's attention. If the sick person cannot obtain a cure, he can at least ask that others be concerned with him. Certain indefinite complaints and chronic ailments are often a means of securing the attention of those around and of justifying some personal deficiency, such as sterility, social or professional failure. This type of sickness is successfully treated in the African churches by the sick person becoming the center of general attention and acquiring compensating status due to his sufferings, which are assimilated to Christ's, and because of the gifts accorded him by the Spirit.

What matters is the reintegration of the patient in the group, who sympathize with his miseries and provide him at the same time with both an explanation of them and compensation for them. The possessed delivered by the Legio complain repeatedly of being again tormented by their devils after a certain time. It is then explained to them that they will have to join the community after their cure and pray for other sick people. This advice is perfectly justified: in the contest with evil, it is the presence and participation of the group that give meaning and efficacy to the techniques used. That is why the religious leaders, in spite of the predominant role they play in some churches in prayer rituals for the sick and in exorcism, can officiate only in the presence of the assembled faithful. The essential element in the ceremony is not the imposition of hands but the gathering of the community around the patients and the possibility that these will become a part of the community after their cure. Prayer for the sick and exorcism are above all processes of social reintegration.

### *Religious Expression and Experience*

In Luo society religious expression and experience are inseparable, complementary, and simultaneous. The faithful

who kneel as a sign of humility and respect experience the majesty of God. It is impossible to say which precedes the other: they are like two sides of the same coin. Every religious act is at the same time experience and expression. When a community sings, is it expressing faith or attaining experience through action?<sup>14</sup>

From a logical point of view, experience ought to precede action. It is the latter aspect of religious life, however, that first strikes the observer and we shall study it first as a matter of convenience. The logical order is not always the order of reality; when Pascal suggested to unbelievers that they kneel, he was counseling them to make use of expression in order to induce experience, and we encounter this technique in the African churches. The second point to be taken up will be the relation between the choice of modes of expression and the nature of religious experience.

*Collective Forms of Religious Expression.* Joachim Wach writes: "The range of *media* employed in the cultural act is very wide: it runs the whole gamut from simple and spontaneous utterances and sounds, tones, words, gestures, and movements to highly standardized practices such as liturgy, sacrifice, sacred dance, divination, procession, pilgrimage."<sup>15</sup> Among all these possibilities, a certain selectivity is at work, and the communal forms of religious expression are bound up with the culture in which they are developed.

In the Luo society no standardized forms of religious expression existed. The head of the lineage who sacrificed to the ancestors was speaking for the group: their participation remained silent. At the time of traditional ceremonies like marriage and burial, each had his role to play in the ritual. It was the same in ceremonies of purification and reconciliation. At no time did the members of the community find themselves socially at a uniform level in face of the supernatural world; on the contrary, each person had a particular mode of expression in function of his own personal circumstances and situation in relation to the others.

The idea of communal religious expression came with the

missionary churches and is founded on the equality of God's children before their Father, whatever their position in society may be, whether man or woman, young or old, rich or poor. Equality, however, is not completely accepted: men and women are seated separately, dance separately, make their contributions to the collection separately and fill different functions in the community and in the hierarchy of the church. But to the extent to which it is recognized theoretically, communal forms of expression become possible. In the churches here studied, the principal ones are prayer, song, procession, and the dance.

Vocal prayer, recited or sung to a psalm tone, is something borrowed from the missionary churches. The basic Christian prayers have been preserved in the majority of the churches: the Our Father, the Creed, the Hail Mary in the Legio and the A.C.L. They play an important role in all public demonstrations. In the Legio the prayers of the Mass are sung in Latin and Greek to show attachment to "true" Catholic tradition. Outside of Mass, the most appreciated prayer is the rosary, to which the faithful, as inspired, add different invocations—to the Blessed Virgin, to Saint Michael, together with litanies, prayers for the souls in purgatory and others. During a prayer for the sick in the Kowak community, I heard the following prayer: "Mary, our mother, you care for your children and help them. Remember us, O Mary, mother of clans, mother of Kowak and of Kamot, remember us and pardon us our sins." The ordinary rosary, with five decades of ten Hail Marys, is recited before Mass, as a prayer for the sick, and for minor cases of possession. It serves as the basis for the Sunday service when there is no priest. There is also a short chaplet, with three Hail Marys replacing the ten. This is considered as more efficacious than the other and reserved for exorcising recalcitrant spirits.

Prayer is not addressed exclusively to the Blessed Virgin. I have heard a bishop, for example, ask God to help the Africans who have so long been forgotten. But that was a case of individual prayer, while the rosary has the advantage of being able to be recited in common by all. The members

of the Legio justify their devotion to Mary by saying that if they confide their life and their prayers to her, she will take care of them after their death. Leonora, a woman to whom Simeo gave the power of driving out devils at the time of his stay at Kowak, said, "Our Lady is the ladder by which we climb to Jesus."

But the most important prayers are the Catena, special prayer formulas of the Catholic Legion of Mary, to which the faithful accord particular potency. These are "powerful" prayers par excellence, for they were formerly reserved to a small privileged group—members of the Legion of Mary, priests, and religious. The belief in them corresponds to the idea of magical power confined to a small group and tied to secret formulas. The African churches are opposed to traditional concepts in this regard, for what gives power to Christian formulas is a revelation given to all men and the unlimited increase of its initiates. The A.C.L. is much like the Legio. The Mass prayers are also said in Latin and in Greek and the rosary is the principal devotion outside of the cult. But no additions are made in order to show perfect respect for Catholic practice.

The Roho Church gives proof of a certain originality in the domain of prayers. The Our Father, the Creed, and some particular prayers of the movement have been translated into a celestial language revealed to the high priest, Barnabas. These prayers are recited at the Sunday service during the first part of the ceremony and produce in the assemblage manifestations of the presence of the Spirit—sighs, cries, groans, gasps. Other prayers are recited in Luo by all the faithful; others still are improvised by the leader of the ceremony, to which the faithful respond by a prayer requesting Jesus to hear and answer the prayers of his children.

Three churches, the Warrouk, Fweny Mar Lam, and the minor branch of the Roho, have a special form of vocal expression, at once individual and collective. It is a prayer asking pardon for sin, a sort of collective lamentation in which each one improvises his own part. The priest makes a beginning by first intoning a supplication in a tragic tone. He



weeps and cries out, expressing suffering and prostration. The faithful join their voices to his, first a few, then the whole assembly. The result is gripping. For ten minutes the church resounds with groans, sighs, sobs, and incoherent phrases. Some of the faithful begin to speak in tongues for a few moments, without, however, going into a trance. It is a veritable explosion of violence and anguish, which attains an astonishingly dramatic intensity. In the Nomyia, Israel, and Fweny Mar Lam churches, the prayers are in Luo and composed in two parts, as in the Roho Church. One part is left to the inspiration of the priest or the leader of the ceremony, the other is recited in choir by the faithful when he has finished. Likewise, in churches of the Johera type, outside of the basic Christian prayers such as the Our Father and the Creed, the initiative in praying is reserved to those authorized to do this in the community. Prayers like the following, made by a Pentecostal leader, are typical: "O almighty God, we know that you alone have power over all things in heaven and on earth and we beg you to hear the prayer of your unhappy children weighed down by their own sins. Alleluia! We thank you for your gifts and for your commandments and we proclaim your word in the name of Jesus, creator of heaven and earth. This is why we ask you to make all those present hear and understand the words of Jesus."

Prayer generally constitutes an important element in worship but more as a form of expression reserved to the leaders of the ceremony rather than as a collective mode of expression. On the contrary, singing is specifically communal, and especially appreciated by the women, the traditional cantors in Luo society. Sometimes the men content themselves by listening and keeping time but male choir heads and cantors are also found in all the churches.

No religious chants existed in Luo society, not even for ceremonies of initiation as in the neighboring Bantu groups, since the Luo do not practice circumcision. Like prayer in common, religious song is a form of expression borrowed from the missionary churches.

The repertoire of the churches is composed in part of

hymns of missionary origin, with melody, rhythm, and words adapted from Western themes. In the Legio and the A.C.L. everything sung during Mass and on most public occasions is borrowed from the Catholic Church—the Ave Maria, Laudate Maria, etc. In the Johera Church, the Book of Prayer contains the text of Anglican hymns sung during Sunday worship. In the Pentecostal Church there are a number of original hymns composed to modern melodies, sometimes in Swahili or even with a short refrain in English:

*Sung in Luo:* “God is good, good to me,  
God is our Father.”

*Refrain in English:* “Yes, God is good to me. (twice)  
Alleluia, Alleluia”

All the African churches have in addition a rich stock of songs based on traditional rhythms and melodies, to which words of biblical inspiration have been adapted. The melodies are often borrowed from the marriage songs sung by the women when they go to find the young bride and accompany her to her husband's farm. They have, therefore, a fast and strongly accented rhythm suitable for accompanying a march and used in some churches to keep time for processions and dances. In all, they are a means of communal expression regarded as a privilege and much appreciated. Other songs are original, although composed by the founders and faithful of the churches on themes inspired by tradition: all are not done to good effect but some are just as successful in arousing the emotions of the assembly as the airs taken from the customary repertoire.

In the Legio, some original airs have been composed for songs reserved for meetings and intercommunity celebrations. One of the most popular thanks our Lady for having revealed the Catena to her faithful. It was not possible to record these, for just the sight of a camera or a recorder made some of the faithful go into convulsions or provoked reactions of distrust and animosity.

In the A.C.L. the only originality evidenced was in a dialogue in psalmody between the choir leader and the

assembly of the faithful. The choir leader chose a passage from the Gospel and chanted it to a rhythm of traditional inspiration, sentence after sentence, while the faithful repeated it after him all together.

The same songs are found in other churches, passed on from one community to the other by the faithful, whose affiliation to any given church is often unstable. The doctrinal content is generally meager. It is almost always a matter of a phrase repeated with some variations and dialogues between the choir leader and the congregation. Here are some examples:

Noah! Open to me!  
 The people follow your ship,  
 The old weep and beg,  
 Jesus! Open to me!  
 Nothing can do it  
 Except eternal life, which gives it.  
 I cannot have the life of heaven  
 Without dying.  
 Here below I have nothing to  
 expect  
 Except what Herod did in his time.

*(Recorded in the Warrouk Church at Kiterere)*

It is love  
 That will let me enter heaven  
 And I shall see the Lamb of God  
 Who has redeemed us.  
 O heavenly country  
 That I so desire to see!  
 What makes me sing  
 Is the Country that I love so much.  
 The Country to which I shall go  
 Is the Country that I love so much.

*(Recorded in the Roho community at Olando. A variant of this exists in the Pentecostal Church, in which the refrain is transformed into "It is Jesus whom I love so much.")*

The heavens pass away  
But the words of Jesus do not pass away.  
Happy are those who obey.  
What will you do if your name  
Is not in the Holy Book?  
How will your name  
Be written in the Holy Book  
If you do evil to your neighbor?  
What will you do on that day  
If your name is not  
In the Holy Book?  
Keep on calling on Jesus  
who died for you!  
What will you do if your name  
Is not written in the Book?

*(The above and the following song were both recorded in the Johera Church at Luanda.)*

When you are called  
Don't act like Jonas  
If you have heard the call  
Go without waiting.  
O Jonas,  
When you heard the voice of God  
You didn't answer.  
The word of God cannot pass away.  
When Jonas heard the call  
For the second time  
He understood the truth was being shown him  
And he ran to understand better.

This second form of religious song, drawing on tradition for its form and on the Bible and the missionary churches for its content, plays a very important role in worship and in all activities of a socioreligious character: prayer for the sick, exorcism, Christian marriages and funerals. It is the rhythm and melody, rather than the doctrinal content, that are the

essential elements necessary to create a favorable ambience for the concentration of religious feeling. Gabriel Le Bras writes: "Is it not the music accompanying supplication or exorcism which the primitive believes wins over the hidden forces that protect or threaten him? . . . One of the essential ends of music is, therefore, to put man in rapport with the supernatural world, to tie that third knot which we have always considered as characterizing religious society, binding a human group to the World Beyond?"<sup>16</sup> Singing supplies the indispensable rhythmic support needed to liberate the individual from that reserve which prevents the Spirit (or the demons) from manifesting themselves when a person is awake. Thus, in [French] Equatorial Africa, the prophet Simon Kimbangu would not heal the sick without the help of a chorus. Singing is also a powerful means of collective expression, making it possible for the faithful to free themselves from the tensions of daily life, lay aside their personal cares, and merge more fully with the community.

The Luo have a liking for processions, a form of collective expression taking place outdoors. In traditional society and up until the present time, because of the scattered living situation, the principal events of the life of the lineage and of the clan were accompanied by collective journeys. For a marriage, it was the women who went in a group to find the bride and bring her to her husband. They adopted a special pace, a sort of rhythmic trot which was at the same time a dance, with the rhythm sustained by special marriage songs. In this way, they were able to cover long distances quickly, without tiring, while expressing the joyous character of the ceremony.

For a burial, the principal actors are men. They dress themselves for the occasion with animal skins, paint their faces, and wear elaborate plumed headdresses. Drums and trumpets are used to mark the rhythm for their chants. If they are accompanied by their herds, they adopt a pace comparable to that of the women going to a marriage. The women, who follow them, play a secondary role in the

cortege, carrying provisions on their heads and answering the leader of the male chorus.

The idea of a ceremonial journey is therefore familiar to the Luo, and certain African churches have been inspired by it. In the Roho and Israel churches Sunday worship is preceded by a procession in the neighborhood. A mixed group, dressed in the costume of the church, go around the *gweng* in the way described at traditional ceremonies—at a trot given rhythm by the chant of the faithful, sometimes with religious songs, accompanied by drum beating and hand clapping. The participants carry banners and invite the curious to join them. In a Pentecostal church, I assisted at a procession of this kind on the occasion of a baptism.<sup>17</sup> Processions of a traditional type follow no special order. If the path is narrow, people walk in single file; if they are in an open place, they advance in a group. The missionary churches have introduced processions of a different kind: the participants must arrange themselves in a certain formation, two or three in front; their pace must be slow and the hymns accompanying the ceremonial journey are simply a form of vocal expression and not a means of keeping people in step. If it is possible to apply these principles with small well-organized groups, with more than a hundred people chaos is soon reached, as happens on Palm Sunday in Catholic parishes when a huge and enthusiastic crowd presses around the church in the atmosphere of a riot.

Processions of a Western kind have achieved a certain success in the African churches, notably in the Legio and the Johera Church. At the time of my first visit to the community of Rabuor, where the bishop of the Legio lives, we came out of Mass in procession in order to go to the place where the bishop was going to converse with me. Later, after our conversation and a meal, the whole community accompanied me in procession to the return road. Everybody took part in the walk which, in both cases, was no more than two hundred yards; the disorder was the same as in Catholic processions; the pace was slow, accompanied, though not

rhythmically, by songs borrowed from the mother church. When the faithful go from one community to another for a celebration or any religious affair whatsoever, or when they go to pray for the sick on nearby farms, they travel in a group as far as possible, in the costume of the church, with all its accessories (crucifix, rosaries), while singing Catholic hymns.

In the Johera Church too I have attended a Western kind of procession. About a dozen women with white dresses and head coverings, walked two by two to a slow rhythm, keeping time to the singing of a traditional melody. They were followed by some important personages and an itinerant evangelist, all dressed in white, about twenty people in all, who crossed the farm yard as far as a chapel built a little apart from the dwellings, where the rest of the community had already assembled.

In processions we see a collective form of expression especially well adapted to Luo culture, although both tradition and the missionary churches have been called upon for models.

Last to be mentioned is the dance, a communal form of expression par excellence but rarely met in African churches. The way in which different churches regard it has already been touched on. Profane dancing is, in fact, one of the activities forbidden by all local movements except the A.C.L. In so far as dancing is a collective religious expression, it is found in different degrees in worship and the other activities of the churches. The Legio, the Johera, Fweny Mar Lam, and Warrouk churches entirely forbid dancing, whether profane or religious. The Nomyia Church and the Pentecostal Assemblies allow their faithful to dance individually while remaining in their places, keeping time to the rhythm of the singing with their bodies. In the Roho and Israel churches, however, the most solemn moment in worship is the sacred dance before the Lord, when the faithful express their joy as David did before the Ark of the Covenant, and so prepare to receive the Holy Spirit, an experience of direct and total communion with the divine. Like singing, dancing helps the

faithful to free themselves of their inhibitions and reserve and abandon themselves to the will of the Spirit.

*Techniques of Religious Expression and Experience.* Forms of expression are not the same in all the churches: the Legio accents prayers; the Israel and Roho churches, the dance; the others, song. Likewise, some churches borrow more than others from traditional means of expression. Thus song, based on rhythms and melodies inspired by local culture, calls not only for vocal but also for bodily participation, while processions become dances when the rhythm of singing and of moving are one.

A study of the different forms of expression reveals the type of religious experience valued by each church. In the Legio and the churches of the same group, with the exception of the Nomyia Church, the faithful seek individual ecstasy through which they obtain the reception of the Holy Spirit, and the most devout indicate that it has been achieved by groans, sighs, incoherent talk, cries, violent movements, convulsions, showing that they are under the control of a power beyond themselves. In the Legio, the contact between the Spirit and those he favors with his presence is permanent: he can take possession of them at any moment of their lives, in private or in public; they then fall into a trance and speak in tongues or prophesy in Luo. In the Roho Church the Spirit manifests himself only at certain privileged times at worship, during the prayers and songs translated into the revealed language, and especially when the dance takes place.

In churches of the Johera type, on the contrary, any manifestation of individual ecstasy is forbidden. The only form of experience allowed and esteemed is of a communal nature, attained and expressed by means of techniques of communal expression. In this case, too, attitudes differ from church to church. The Johera Church and the A.C.L. do not allow any manifestation of the presence of the Spirit, whether during worship or at any other time. The Pentecostal Assemblies are less strict and allow individual ecstasy on certain exceptional occasions, for example, at confirmation, but there is no question of it being characteristic of its



religious life. The Warrouk and Fweny Mar Lam churches, the former at the prayer for forgiveness and the latter when praying for the sick, allow a limited amount of individual manifestations—sighs, groans, convulsive movements during worship, on condition that those who indulge do not lose control of themselves. It is on this point that the two groups differ: churches of the Legio type seek to lose control; those of the Johera type forbid it. But if the distinction is clear between the two type-churches, it is less so with the others, which range themselves along a continuum between the two extremes.

A study of the forms of expression reveals the type of experience sought; inversely, the kind of experience desired influences the choice of the techniques of expression. In fact, the latter do not just express an experience, they also serve to induce it.

In churches of the Legio type, the individual's loss of control is obtained by having recourse to different methods which in combination produce the desired result in the most impressionable people.

Preparation for ecstasy is made in a particular ambience. In the Roho and Israel churches and the Legio, worship takes place in a closed and darkened building. The crowding together in a close and overheated place; the physical contact with those near you; the deafening sound of the chant; sometimes the clapping of hands and the beating of drums; public confessions or outcries of the faithful: all are means of breaking down a person's reserve, of reinforcing the surrounding emotional tension, and of preparing for the loss of individual control under the impact of collective exaltation.

Bodily techniques are still more important and can even permit the atmosphere here just described to be dispensed with. For example, respiration which can be accelerated in rhythm and amplified in volume by vocal exertion, praying, singing; or by movement, dancing, walking in procession; or by deep breathing, sighing, gasping—all these have well-known effects on perception. They form the foundation for Yoga, for childbirth without pain, for techniques of relaxa-

tion, and a practical means of simulating a fit of hysteria. Postures, too, promote a subject's receptivity, especially when prolonged. In the Legio most of the faithful stand upright or kneel, their eyes closed the better to withdraw from the world, prostrating with their foreheads to the ground. In the Roho Church the faithful also pray standing or kneeling with their eyes closed to withdraw from the world and attain to the supernatural realm.

Rhythmic movement, which acts directly on the unconscious, also plays a fundamental role: clapping hands and stamping in time, dancing to the rhythm of drums or simply of the songs, trembling that agitates the whole body. Experiences in the curative psychomotor and psychophonic domains have demonstrated that sometimes when it is impossible to establish communication with certain mental patients on the level of the conscious, it can be established on the level of the unconscious, due to rhythm and respiration, which bring them out of their inner world and put them into contact with the real world. The technique used by the African churches seems to open a door of communication in the opposite direction, utilizing rhythm and respiration to go out of the real into the mental world.

Physical shocks can prepare the way for ecstatic experience or, at the very least, help one of the faithful to withdraw from the real world. Just as being shaken and hit on the head at the time of exorcism reawakens the impure spirit in a patient and finishes by driving him out, so the faithful prepare themselves to receive the Holy Spirit by convulsive and violent movements of their head, members, and whole body. Contact with cold water, the water of baptism or of the *Asperges me*, can also produce a comparable effect.

In churches of the Johera type, the techniques of expression, as well as the experience that they are intended to achieve, are different. In the Legio collective ways of expression serve as support for individual forms: singing, dancing, and prayer supply the ambience and occasion necessary to develop each one's receptivity. In churches of the Johera kind, there is nothing else but collective expression and experience.

First of all, on the psychological plane, the accent is placed on the idea of the group rather than on mystery. The centers of worship are as bright as possible; doors and windows are simple openings and cannot be closed. Manifestations of joy are encouraged either in the traditional way with the high, sweet, birdlike cries of the women or with exclamations like "Heaven!" "Life eternal!" "Alleluia!" But noise, sighs, inarticulate cries, and speaking in celestial language incomprehensible to the uninitiated, are all forbidden. Likewise, in regard to bodily techniques, no overt reaction to the descent of the Spirit is permitted: no special postures, breathing, or movements. The faithful pray standing or sitting, but the ceremonies consist chiefly in songs and sermons during which they remain seated. This is more or less true of the two principal churches of this group, the Pentecostals and the Johera; the Fweny Mar Lam and Warrouk churches are at an intermediate point between them and movements like the Legio.

In all churches of the Johera group, however, the preferred means of collective expression is song, with rhythm marked by hand clapping and sometimes by stamping. The chant is not a means by which individuals accelerate or amplify their respiration, but, on the contrary, a way to unite their rhythmic breathing to form one voice and one body. It is not a palpable individual response to some exterior force that is sought but a feeling of communion with the whole group. Communal participation in the music and rhythm can, moreover, be simply auditory: I came across choruses in four out of five churches in this group, as compared to one in those of the Legio type.

In both types of churches, the community serves as the human dimension in which preparation is made for a religious experience. At the same time it also supplies the faithful with the necessary techniques to acquire the experience and a means for evaluating it.

In churches of the Legio type, the experience sought is an individual one and collective techniques of expression serve as an aid insofar as they allow the individual to reach a state

of communication with the divine. All takes place as if the faithful used the community as a springboard, the most receptive in the group being the most open to the descent of the Spirit. In churches of the Johera type, the experience sought is communal, and the techniques of expression, especially singing, are meant to establish communion among the people. It is by integrating himself in the group that the individual experiences the divine. While for the Legio type of church, as Roger Bastide writes, "...communion with men works only by way of communion with the gods";<sup>18</sup> for the Johera, the opposite phenomenon is produced—all happens as if the faithful encounter the divine, have an experience with "ultimate reality,"<sup>19</sup> in communion with the group.

These two kinds of religious experience correspond, according to an expression of Bastide, to "the experience which men have of the social structure."<sup>20</sup> When it is perceived as dominated by the forces of evil that oppress the individual personally, the experience is individual and expresses itself in an ecstatic trance, at once painful (the experience of the social structure is interiorized) and compensatory (the experience of the social structure is sublimated). On the contrary, when the feeling of frustration and helplessness that results from experiencing the social structure is perceived as a communal phenomenon, the religious experience becomes communal and manifests itself by communion with the group that supersedes and compensates for the general social structure. As has already been stressed, both forms of experience can coexist in the same church and in the same person.

Whether it is a question of a form of expression or a form of experience, the local community still holds a central place in the religious life of the faithful. Just as the alleviation of physical and psychological suffering becomes real and definitive only if the compensatory effect is prolonged in the social sphere by integration in the group, so does the community furnish the cadre and means for religious expression and experience. It cannot guarantee fullness of experience, for that is the function of the merits of each and of the divine will: those who dance have chosen God, but those who fall

into ecstasy have been chosen by God. Nevertheless, in the measure in which experience is produced, and in order to produce experience, the community furnishes the models and techniques of expression. Contrary to Margaret Mead's explanation,<sup>21</sup> glossalalia is not a way of expressing the inexpressible in the Legio but a stereotyped and esteemed form of expression, so that the faithful do not wait for a trance to express themselves in this mystical language.

When the community fails to offer the faithful forms of expression and experience that are valued and satisfying, these do not try to improvise something contrary to the customs of the group but change from one community to another in order to find elsewhere an ambience and models that suit them. In fact, as in the case of the techniques used in the warfare against evil, the forms of expression and of experience have meaning only in relation to the group. In churches of the Legio type, direct communion with the Holy Spirit is sought not only for itself but also because it is a source of prestige within the community and in the whole church, and a means of acquiring new worth in society as a whole. For churches of the Johera type, belonging to the community of the elect, dedicated by participation in communal activities, makes the individual a person in a group wherein he has a place and a role and is related to society as a whole. It is through the community that forms of religious expression and experience are elaborated and the compensatory effect of encountering the divine can be felt. Expression and experience are mingled and inseparable, and it is the community which makes possible and gives proof of man's communion with God.

## Notes

1. F. B. Welbourn and B. A. Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home* (London: Oxford Press, 1966), pp.92-94; M. Whisson, *Change and Challenge* (Nairobi: Christian Council of Kenya, 1966).

2. *A Place to Feel at Home*, p. 128.

3. This point will be developed in Chapter 7 in relation to conversion.

4. The term sacrament is used here in a general, not a theological, sense.

5. According to Welbourn and Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, p. 103.

6. The description of Luo marriage customs varies according to authors, informants, and regions. For some, the young girl is carried off by the young man and his friends and brought by force to her husband's village. For others, the young girl is accompanied to her husband's village by the women of the family. The only custom about which there is general accord is the final ceremony, called *riso* which definitively consecrates the union and takes place after several years when the woman has given birth to her first son.

7. In the traditional society, polygamy was the ideal which only rich men could realize. Today monogamy has taken the place of the ideal in the African churches and only the most devout who are able to resist the pressure of their family milieu can persevere in it.

8. This was a Revival service, with two preachers from Kenya participating. The term *leader* is used in a general sense in this study and designates all those who take initiative in the community and not someone fulfilling some particular function or functions.

9. Bread and wine are dear and rare in the district. That is why the idea that the ingredients necessary for communion are not basic but luxury foodstuff has persisted. Orange juice, soda, cookies, bread without crusts, crackers, are all expensive food. What corresponds to bread and wine in daily food would be *kuon* and beer made from grain.

10. This is surprising, because in Luo society sharing the same food means sharing the same blood. It seems that the way in which the missionary churches have presented communion has never suggested that it is a family meal.

11. At the time of the Pentecostal Revival meeting in the Kogaja community, one of the preachers from Kenya had a guitar and accompanied the religious songs with it, thus "Christianizing" an instrument which has come to symbolize corruption.

12. Often put in the thatched roof of a dwelling, for that is the only place where anything can be hidden, at least inside.

13. Christopher Ogalo and other members of the Legio have voiced strong criticism of their church before me, complaining of the constraints it puts on them: endless prayers, incessant journeys for celebrations, meetings, prayers for the sick, exorcisms, etc.

14. Interest here is limited to communal and public manifestations. I have no documents about private devotions and seek to discover the relationships between expression, experience, and community, rather than individual attitudes relating to the divinity.

15. Joachim Wach, *Types of Religious Experience, Christian and Non-Christian* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 41.

16. Gabriel Le Bras, "Sur la sociologie de la musique sacrée," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions* 16 (1963): 139.

17. See above, pp. 184-185.

18. Roger Bastide, *Les Religions africaines du Brésil* (Paris: Biblio. de Sociologie Contemporaine, PUF, 1960), p. 520.

19. Wach, *Types of Religious Experience*, p. 35.

20. Bastide, *Religions africaines du Brésil*, p. 520.

21. Margaret Mead writes: "I think the individual speaks in tongues when his capacity to give structures to experience breaks down . . . those who have strong, immediate feelings, have no words, no acts, no symbolism that will appropriately contain what they have experienced," "Ritual Expression of Cosmic Sense," *Worship* 40 (1966): 69.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# The Basic Community in the African Churches

An analysis of the doctrine, organization, and religious activities of the African churches has made it possible to emphasize the central place that the local community holds in their life. In this last chapter I shall gather together the elements scattered throughout the preceding pages in order to situate the community in relation to both the faithful and the churches. A study of conversion will first reveal the influence exercised by the community on the conversion of an individual and his choice of a church. I shall then try to show how the response of the African churches to the problems of society as a whole extends to the individual level through the local group. Finally, I shall propose a definition of basic community as it is found within the particular limited context of the African churches, and then present some conclusions that can be drawn from it.

### *Conversion and Community*

Theoretically, the African churches address themselves to all Luo, to all Africans, even to all men, without distinction of race or condition. However, the public to which the movements studied here address themselves is limited to relatively clear-cut categories and, within these, not everybody is reached by their teaching. On the other hand, their possible adherents have a choice to make among several churches offering satisfaction for their different aspirations. These three points are going to be examined here. We recall that material and cultural conditions are relatively homogeneous in the district for all the people and this makes it possible to eliminate supplementary differentiating factors and to



consider only those that have to do with the religious posture.

Before relating cases of individual conversions, they ought to be placed within their framework, the local community. The example presented here is the Legio community at Siruka, where Simeo made his first visit in Tanzania when brought there by Celimena and another woman delegate of the parochial Legion of Mary. There, too, occurred the first clashes between the Catholic missionaries and Simeo's Tanzanian disciples. We are dealing then with a relatively old community but one that is still close enough to its beginnings to have kept its initial dynamism.

The community of Siruka numbers twenty-six members, of which ten are men and sixteen women. Twenty-one were Catholics before attaching themselves to the Legio and were baptized between 1931 and 1962. Three others were "pagans" before entering the community. About two I have no information. The term "pagan" is used by the Luo to designate those who have not received baptism in any church.

Among the men, eight were former Catholics, one had been baptized in danger of death, and another was a pagan. The two latter entered the Legio because they found the studies necessary for admission to the sacraments in the Catholic Church too long. Among the Catholics, four had been excluded from the sacraments because of polygamy or for having married a daughter to a polygamous man. Another was converted after being healed by the prayers of the Legio. The community has three principal leaders: Raphael Tieng'o, assistant to the bishop of Rabuor, Girpas Wayoga; Johanes Oleng'a, a priest; and Stephanus Omuga, a lay leader and Celimena's husband.

As to the women, twelve were Catholics before becoming members of the Legio; two were pagan; and about two information is lacking. Four were wives of community leaders, six had no children, and two, former Catholics, had joined the community after being freed of an evil spirit by the prayers of the Legio.

This example is a good illustration of the composition of

a great number of communities belonging to the different movements studied. It is noteworthy that the pagans, that is, those who have joined a church for the first time, are always a minority: most of the faithful generally come from another church, except for the Pentecostals, who do not have a mother church. Pagan or Christian, man or woman, they are almost always illiterate and belong to the first and second cultural levels as these were defined in the first chapter.

Having given an idea of the composition of the whole group and of the origins of the faithful, I am now going to offer some examples of individual conversions. These are found to be principally of two kinds. First, there are those connected with some circumstance in the life of the subject: a prohibition against polygamy; the length of studies necessary for admission to the sacraments in local missionary churches; the impossibility of access to some status aspired to (for example, the priesthood) in the church from which they came or in society in general; relationship with a member of an African church. The last case happens frequently enough: when a member of an entirely pagan family is converted to an African church, his whole family follows him. The story of the conversion of Elisa Ongoro of Olando provides such an example. The second type of conversion is connected with some physiological or psychological state of the subject; sickness, drunkenness, abuse of tobacco or drugs, possession, sterility, deviant behavior, among others. These two types do not, however, exclude one another, and the same conversion can combine both aspects. Here are some instances of conversions of the second type, some men, some women; all those presented have been taken from the Legio but reflect a general tendency in all African churches, whether they belong to the Legio or the Johera type.

Girpas Wayoga, the bishop of Rabuor, was a notorious bad boy. As a young man he played the guitar at night parties forbidden by the missions; he jeered at the authority of the elders and the customs of his people. Then in 1940 he was baptized in the Catholic Church at Kowak, at that time the only mission in the district. Some years later he came to the

priest complaining of being tormented by an evil spirit. To deliver him from it, the priest recited prayers, placed the Holy Book on his head and blessed him with holy water; but at the end of a week the spirit returned to torment him. He went back to the church, where the priests counseled him to have himself taken care of by traditional methods. He then consulted a specialist who gave him the needed attention and taught him how to control his spirit. Girpas then became a *ja-bilo* (a magician), thanks to the power given him by the spirit who possessed him, and he set about practicing magic to the detriment of those around him until Simeo came, exorcised him, and made him bishop of the district.

This gives us an instance of a person, poorly integrated in his milieu, who finds in an African church an alternative to the traditional forms of deviant behavior. The second presents a very different case, a man who is the victim of his own vices.

Christopher was a drunkard who was always consuming locally distilled alcohol. One day he drank so much that he fell ill and stayed in bed for three days unable to eat or drink. Members of the Legio came to pray at a neighboring farm, where a woman who belonged to their group lived, and she brought them to Christopher's house. They prayed for him for an hour or two and he began to feel better. The next day he got up and was able to eat and, as soon as he was cured he too, in his turn, became a member of the Legio.

This second account is of a very usual kind, especially in churches of the Johera type. It generally concerns a man whose case is desperate and who, miraculously cured by the fervent prayers of the local community of the sufferings caused by his own abuses, ends by triumphing over his vice, recovering his health, and joining the community. Conversions like this are not always definitive. We know of Owinyo Maraga, of the Roho community at Olando, who fell back into his failings after each baptism. Christopher, too, seems on the point of leaving the Legio and complains of the constant demands of this confession: prayers that are too long; journeys that take place all the time; meetings that have

to be attended even when there is something else to be done; conditions for receiving communion that are particularly severe.

As far as women are concerned, you hear the same kind of stories. The conversions of Christina Akinyi and Agnes Maranda have already been told, the former cured by the prayers of the Legio, the latter by those of the Pentecostals. Each joined the church to which she owed her recovery. The story of Regina Nyamwanga is worth pointing out. She was possessed by a legion of evil spirits and became a member of the Legio on the advice of people who lived nearby and had been successfully exorcised in that church. Here is another case of conversion, reproduced from the testimony of Agnes Bodi, born in Kenya near Kisumu and married in Tanzania in the Tatwe region.

At that time Agnes lived at Kisumu with her young sister, Serfina, a member of the Legio. When Serfina wished to take Agnes with her to pray, she answered that she was a Catholic and had no intention of joining a religion of devils like her sister's.

One day Agnes was preparing some beer, a drink forbidden to members of the Legio. Her young sister told her that in making it she was helping the devil and that God was going to break the beer pots to show his anger. But Agnes became very angry and abusive of her sister. Three days later, when the beer was ready and those invited arrived for the festivity, Agnes discovered that the largest jar was broken and that the beer had run off into the ground. She began to abuse her sister more than ever, saying that it was the work of the devil, that her religion was diabolical, for the Holy Spirit would not take the trouble to come and break her jar.

A few days later Serfina asked her sister permission to go pray at the Legio church for it was the day reserved for divine worship. But Agnes refused to let her go and the two went to work in the fields all morning. When they returned at noon, Serfina asked again if she could go to church; but Agnes once more became angry and forbade her to go. Serfina replied that Agnes would have to bear the conse-

quences of her refusal, for she was opposing the will of God. Agnes was content to laugh.

However, the following night, she could not sleep. In the morning she went to pray with her sister at the Legio church. On entering she fell to the ground, and the Legio members said that the Holy Spirit had just taken possession of her and was manifesting himself in this way. She answered that it was silly to believe that the Holy Spirit gave such signs of his presence and she refused to let them pray for her. Agnes slept no better the following night and waited for the day praying. When dawn came, she was as pale as a sheet and looked quite ill. She put on a bright red dress and went back to the church. While she was on her way there, she suddenly tore off her dress and went on in her slip. Her young sister ran after her with the pieces of her dress but she refused to put them on and the people said that she had gone crazy. When she reached the church, the Legio members told her that the Holy Spirit did not wish her to wear a red dress and had forced her to tear it up. They prayed for her and from that time on she became one of the Legio.

The accounts of men and women reported here belong to the second type of conversion, linked to the subject's physiological or psychological state. But conversion is much more apt to stem from both some exterior circumstance and a coexisting interior state. Take Celimena's husband, Stephanus: he had always been considered as a bad neighbor in the *gweng'* of Siruka, unusually avaricious and little given to hospitality; on the other hand, he had tried for a long time to become a catechist in the Catholic Church, but the priest at the mission had always refused to employ him because of his unpopularity. When Simeo came to Siruka, Stephanus was one of the first to follow him, satisfying at once his ambitions and his aggressive character.

In fact, the numerous interviews that I had with members of the African churches in the district and a study of the map giving the centers of worship, show that a relationship exists between belonging to one of these movements and being but

insufficiently integrated in one's surroundings for one reason or another.

The women who are numerous in most of the communities are by definition "displaced persons," since tradition has it that a man seek a wife as far away as possible from his home, so that most of the women come from Kenya, a milieu palpably different from Tanzania. Further, as J. C. Froelich writes, "... in all social relationships, in the public life of their husband's village, they are strangers, unknown by the ancestors."<sup>1</sup> This situation can be aggravated by strained relations with their mother-in-law or with the other wives of their husband, or again because they are sterile and under the threat of being accused of sorcery.<sup>2</sup> Women react to this situation by joining the African churches in numbers; there they feel themselves to be full citizens in the Kingdom of God, with a goodly share of initiative and responsibility, and a status independent of their family standing.

Men, too, can be displaced persons, notably in regions of recent immigration, that is, in the parish of Tatwe, in the northern part of Ingri parish, the western part of the Masonga parish, and the crowded surroundings of Utegi, which has had a rapid growth in the last few years. In these regions a veritable melting pot of lineages, clans, and even ethnic groups has been created. Almost all the inhabitants, and that includes those who lived in these places before others began their massive immigrations, find themselves surrounded by strangers in a situation of insecurity. The cause of tensions and difficulties between neighbors in the region of Kowak and Kamot is different: there it is the over-population of lands belonging to the clan. But whatever the causes, the situations of conflict and insecurity seem to favor the propagation of the African churches, as the map of worship centers demonstrates.

In a general way, all those who are unable, for internal or external reasons, to express themselves and to play in full the role to which they aspire, find themselves in a state of psychological and social disequilibrium. A polygamous per-

son excluded from the sacraments in the Catholic Church; one of the faithful who wishes to become a catechist or, if a catechist, a priest; a woman with no children; a celibate lacking the means to marry: all these are likely to look for compensation for their frustrations.

On the level of individual men and women, we meet a double problem in Luo society. Traditional Luo society was socially cohesive, so that insecurity arises when social structures disintegrate; it was also mobile, so that frustration occurs when no means are available for people to rise above their station in life to achieve their objectives. As already remarked, the general problem is often complicated for individuals with physiological and psychological conditions that augment their feelings of insecurity and frustration.

The factors that lead people to attach themselves to an African church can therefore be summarized in this way. First of all, there is sufficiently long contact with the Western presence or with Christian teaching and, preferably, membership in a missionary church, for the notion of salvation to have penetrated the person's mind; then there exists in society a feeling of insecurity and frustration that is reflected in the personal life of the individual; and finally, in the individual himself there is a physiological or psychological lack of balance which makes him more alive and reactive to common problems and personal difficulties. The more accentuated their lack of balance, the keener their perception of the general malaise and the stronger their tendency to find a group with a developed feeling of identity and many possibilities for compensation. Churches like the Legio address themselves first of all to this category of persons, while churches like the Johera address themselves to those whose disequilibrium and their perception of it are not as marked. But the basic conditions for becoming attached to an African church are the same, whichever type it is. In fact, as stated several times already, if the two type-churches are the opposite of one another, the others form a continuum between these two extremes. It can be said that the faithful

make a choice between the two kinds of groups not as a result of their comprehension of their different natures but on the basis of their own more or less intense perception of their general situation and personal plight.

However, joining an African church does not happen in the abstract. A direct contact with one or more of the faithful decides the conversion: sometimes it is the advice of a friend; sometimes it is a whole community who come to pray for somebody who is ill or who gather to exorcise a possessed person; sometimes it is the example of the faith and prayer of a group of the faithful. The church, in the eyes of the faithful and in the eyes of those who will eventually join it, is first and foremost the local community, and geographical proximity is an important factor in the choice of a movement.

Then again it has become evident that for beliefs and techniques to have lasting effect in offering compensation and security, they must extend to the social level: the neophyte must be integrated in the group. This is why the affiliation of the faithful is often unstable: until they have found their place and the satisfaction of their aspirations, conversion will remain incomplete.

Kefa Nyaluso, Pentecostal leader in the *gweng'* of Ratia, had first occupied a post as lay leader in the Nomyia Church; Owinyo Maraga of Olando had received baptism successively with the Pentecostals and the Israelites before finding salvation in the Roho Church. Finally, it is the feeling of belonging to a given group that determines church affiliation rather than the contrary. As J. Seguy has written of Jehovah's Witnesses, "...truth flows from the sense of wellbeing or of pleasure that is found in living in the ambience of the organization."<sup>3</sup> Salvation is found where the faithful are recognized and discover their place.

### *Churches and Community*

The faithful see the African churches in and through their local communities. These incarnate the law, form the center



of social and religious life, and serve as the point at which the initiate is integrated into the movement. The response of the African churches to the problems of society reaches individuals through the mediation of the local group, and its efficacy depends on the adjustment of each person in the community. We are now going to study the characteristics of this response and the way in which these are reflected on the local level.

For Georges Balandier, the African churches constitute "a global and ambiguous response to an ambiguous situation globally perceived."<sup>4</sup> The idea of ambiguity describes well the attitude of the African churches: they seek to oppose and at the same time to be identified with society and the missionary churches from which they have issued. Although they call into question the values and practices of their mother churches, they have not succeeded in freeing themselves of the Western Christian model offered to them since the beginning of the century. Again, they sometimes criticize violently agents of the local administration, all the while proclaiming their attachment to the national government. It seems that in fact the African churches are aware at one and the same time of the danger that foreign influence and new institutions represent for the traditional culture and way of life, and of the solutions that Western civilization brings to the very problems that it creates. From this a dual reaction of rejection and assimilation results: rejection of the agents of transformation—missionaries, the colonial or national administration; assimilation of the principles of transformation—ideas of evolution, salvation, progress.

At the local level this dual attitude is reflected in the life of the communities. Criticism is leveled at men rather than at institutions, and its violence depends on the real conflict experienced by the group: the Legio is especially hostile to the missionaries at Siruka where the priest physically blocked Simeo and his disciples from participating in Catholic devotions at the local chapel. But the Catholic Church is everywhere considered, insofar as it is an institution founded on divine revelation, as the source of truth and the true way of salvation. The Legio always sees itself as within the

Church, even if the wickedness of men has brought about a temporary separation. The situation is the same in the Johera Church, in which criticism has to do with the men on the Anglican side who brought about the rupture; but the Anglican Church continues to appear as the guide in whose footsteps the Johera Church must follow. We recall that Ajouga first tried to have a bishop for his new movement consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury before having recourse to an election. On all sides you meet the feeling that the separation was inevitable, justified, and necessary for the salvation of the group, but at the same time, regrettable, due to the wickedness of a few, and limited to human institutions. A little anecdote will illustrate the point. One day Marcellianus and Dyonis, the two A.C.L. leaders at Siruka, came to see me at the mission of Tatwe. When it came time for them to go, Dyonis said to Marcellianus: "Shall we go say good day to Jesus in the tabernacle? He's not like men. He doesn't hold a grudge against us."

A second aspect of the African churches' response to the problems of Luo society is its marginal character. If we consider, for example, that there are more than eighty thousand Luo in North Mara and that the independent movements there number about twenty-five hundred persons, we see clearly that this is no question of a mass reaction but that it concerns only a fringe of the population. In the discussion on conversions, the origins of those attaching themselves to the African churches were brought out. It is plain that they belong to a category of people who, while having a certain acquaintance with Christianity and Western civilization, do not have enough education to rise above their milieu through their own resources. The faithful of the missionary churches who have studied at a mission in order to be admitted to the sacraments make up part of the group, as well as "pagans" of the surroundings, migrant workers, children who have not attended school for more than four years, and others with limited advantages. It has also been shown that members of the African churches are people poorly adapted to their environment either because they are

in a "displaced" situation or for physical or psychological reasons. Quantitatively and qualitatively, the faithful of the independent movements represent a marginal fraction of the population.

The marginal character of the African churches is, nevertheless, an essential aspect of the solution which they hold out, that is, a parallel society in which the problems of social cohesion and mobility are resolved. Bryan Wilson writes: "Becoming religious, accepting the promise for deferred reward is itself an agency not only of discipline, but also of enhancing status in this world. The sect which persuades men that they are poor, 'the least the lost the lowest and the last,' promises them ultimate salvation in the after-life, also offers a foretaste of heaven in the assembly, establishes its own inner status structure, induces members to behave in respectable ways to each other, and to conduct themselves as *saints manqués* in the wider society."<sup>5</sup> In rejecting the world, the faithful of the African churches situate themselves in relation to it, and their status on the spiritual plane is all the higher in proportion to the inferiority and precariousness of their position in general society. The faithful likewise acquire status within the organization of the church, determined in function of its value system and its hierarchy. This can lead to a heightened status in general society for the group or the individual. Women as a group and men as individuals find "a new opening for their desires for leadership, for an amelioration of their status, and for rising within any community whatsoever."<sup>6</sup>

In creating a parallel society, the African churches were not proposing to innovate but to reproduce the missionary model and to set up a similar organization with parishes, a clergy, and a certain formalism of religious life. However, the marginal character of their public has had consequences that they did not seek to bring about and which, despite them, constitutes a second aspect of their response to the problems of society. The African churches tried, in fact, to form parishes and communities of the same size as the missionary churches, in which numbers are the criterion of success.

Given the very narrow circle in which their recruitment takes place, most of the communities do not exceed thirty members and this difference in scale allows the establishment of personal relationships between the faithful with all the implications which that involves. The problem of social cohesion is thus resolved by accident, thanks to the reconstitution of the bonds which characterize traditional social organization. To put it differently, the apparent failure of the African churches and their marginal character contribute in reality to the solution which they propose.<sup>7</sup>

Continuing on the same subject, it can be remarked that the African churches, by reconstituting a parallel society and giving a value to modes of behavior different from those of society in general, offer an alternative to the traditional forms of deviance. Exorcism, for example, is an alternative to the traditional treatment for possession; a magician can become a powerful and respected man in the church if he renounces commerce with the lower spirits and seeks in exchange the powers which the Holy Spirit will not fail to accord him.<sup>8</sup> Also, people who have been open to accusations of sorcery—barren women, people of aggressive or uncommunicative temperaments—are often the first to attach themselves to the African churches, thus proving that they are not sorcerers or even presenting themselves as victims and submitting to exorcism. As for those who are too successful in their affairs and could also be accused of enriching themselves by inadmissible means, they too join the African churches and their wealth then appears as a recompense for their piety.

The third aspect of the African churches' response is its character of wholeness. This is expressed on two levels, in offering a completely new conception of the world and holding out the possibility of total involvement in the life of a community.

According to Margaret Mead, affiliation in an African church corresponds with "a demand on the part of the faithful for a totalistic solution, because their own experience is itself fragmentary and partial."<sup>9</sup> The upheaval that they

see in their world becomes, because they never go outside of it, a world upheaval. Returning one day from the Roho community at Kitembe, I was stopped on the way by a seer, who wanted to warn me that a catastrophe was going to strike the United States. "I see," he said, "trees uprooted and roofs of houses blown away. Warn the elders so that they can take measures." By analogy with their own collapsing world, they extend their vision of the end of a world to the nations that have invaded them and precipitated their chaos. This explains the apocalyptic bent of most of the movements studied here, plainly visible in churches of the Legio type but present, too, although less obvious, in those like the Johera. You can hear it expressed in their songs and sermons and in other ways.

If the solution on the cosmic level is general, it is so on the individual level as well. Margaret Mead writes: "... the universal quality, shared by leaders and followers, is the wholeness, the total commitment of the experience, the total revision of a former view of the world."<sup>10</sup> The involvement required by the African churches is complete and touches every aspect of existence. In missionary circles it is often thought that the faithful leave Western churches because they are too exacting in regard to morals. In reality, the African churches make much greater demands, for they do not content themselves with ignoring or rejecting customs such as polygamy or magic, but make them a part of the religious world in such a way that the faithful, by situating themselves in the cosmic conflict, also take their place in a community in which the warfare of good and evil is translated into terms of behavior. Depending on the particular movement and the extent of its demands, conversion can represent a revision of a person's whole life. In the Legio the faithful are called to intense and continual participation, to witnessing at all times by their clothing, bearing, activities, and mode of life. In the Johera Church, which is at the other extreme of the continuum, participation and witness are reduced to some daily acts like morning and night prayer and grace before meals or some weekly obligation like worship. The other churches are located somewhere between these two poles,

but all require their adherents to conduct themselves in a way that distinguishes them from the rest of society. To become one of the community of the elect means to adopt a different way of living with new rules and new objectives—to put on the new man.

For such a conversion of life to be possible, the new recruit must be physically received into a group in which rules and objectives are defined, lived, and valued in a social structure capable of replacing the traditional milieu. Integration in the group is the final stage of conversion: here we have the explanation for unstable affiliation, for insofar as the faithful have not found a community which offers them a place and a role at the same time as an explanation for their problems, salvation does not penetrate into the depths of their consciousness.

### *The Basic Community*

The response of the African churches to the problems of society could be defined as conversion of life in a life community. Throughout the different chapters of this study, the analysis has been centered on the local community, and its role in the life of the independent movements has been stressed. What is needed now is an explanation of what I understand by local community and basic community.

All communities, in fact, are not basic communities, but all can become so in relation to a given individual in a culture at a given moment. For the little Luo child, the family farmstead is the basic community. It ceases to be so when he has passed some years of his life as a school boarder. In traditional society, the lineage was the basic community for the adult. Today modern evolution has reduced the role of the lineage so that it is no longer the point at which the individual is integrated into general society, because many aspects of life elude it and because the bonds between its members have become weakened.

We have here the two fundamental elements that constitute a basic community: bonds that unite its members; the part it plays in their lives. A basic community is a social

unity, the locus for personal and permanent relationships between individuals, the point at which their integration into society as a whole takes place. The African churches have given birth to little groups of faithful with potential for playing this role. Thanks to their marginal character, local communities are small enough for their members to establish personal and permanent relationships. Furthermore, by holding out to them a new vision of the world, which extends to a conversion of life, the local communities, as representatives of the churches, become points of reference and of integration through which the faithful reconstruct their world and find their place in it.

A basic community takes different forms depending on culture and subcultures. In the district of North Mara, where the Luo are still deeply immersed in the customary milieu, the basic community is formed on the model of the lineage: the local community is evocative of the lineage in its geographic and human dimension, in its functions, and in the parallel it draws between blood kinship and fellowship of spirit. But people who have received some education and have been cut off from the model of the lineage, no longer think of a basic community in the same terms: you meet none of the faithful in the African churches of the district who have attended school for more than four years. It is conceivable that in an urban milieu the model of the basic community could be different. Religious affiliation is not always identified with a search for a basic community, which can be founded on kinship, ethnic group, nationality, membership in a political or labor organization. In traditional society, it encompassed every aspect of existence: religious, social, political, economic. Today its field is narrower. Its principal characteristics, however, remain the same—the personal nature of the bonds between its members and its role as a hinge between the individual and society.

A point that seems essential in defining a basic community is its size. In a given culture or subculture, the relationships between members of the group depend for their nature, their frequency, and their intensity on the geographic

and human dimensions of the social unit to which they belong. As to geographic dimensions, the local communities of the African churches are based on the unit of the neighborhood, the *gweng'*. As to human dimensions, I have advanced as a hypothesis a size comparable to a lineage. Nevertheless, most of the local communities have less than thirty members, which seems small for an average lineage. But if we take into account the marginal character of the African churches, we can see how this extends to the very concept of basic community and gives it the aspect of a marginal group in relation to its model.

The hypothesis formulated here has received interesting confirmation, thanks to an experiment carried out in the Catholic parishes of the district of North Mara, which was mentioned in the introduction.<sup>11</sup>

In Nyarombo, Catholic communities were founded in accordance with the conclusions reached about the African churches based on the principles already defined. They were founded geographically on the neighborhood unit, and the principal activities proposed to the faithful were mutual help and worship, one out of two Sundays there was to be a simple liturgy of the word without a priest, and the practical application of Christian charity was to extend not only to members of the group but to everybody in the neighborhood. The idea of the spiritual kinship of the children of God, similar to blood kinship, was the basis for association.

A statistical study of twenty-four communities has made it possible to establish some fundamental relations between their size and the degree to which their faithful participate in the life of the group.

The size of the communities has been measured by the number of the faithful present during the monthly visit of the priest. As in the case of the African churches, the count took into consideration only the active, not the nominal members.<sup>12</sup>

Seven groups had 100 to 200 members

Seven groups had 65 to 90 members

Ten groups had 35 to 60 members



Different elements of the social and religious life of the communities have been measured from the registers of the parishes and with the help of a questionnaire submitted to the delegates of the communities to the parish council for the period of June 1, 1968 to June 1, 1969. A comparison of membership participation with the size of the groups gave the following results:

Participation in activities of mutual help:

In groups of 35 to 60 members: 40 to 65%

In groups of 65 to 90 members: 20 to 45%

In groups of 100 to 200 members: 10 to 65%

Percentage of infant baptisms in relation to the number of adults:

In groups of 35 to 60 members: 10 to 60%

In groups of 65 to 90 members: 5 to 30%

In groups of 100 to 200 members: 10 to 50%

Average individual contribution to the collection during the monthly visit of the priest:

In groups of 35 to 60 members: 10 to 40 cents

In groups of 65 to 90 members: 10 to 30 cents

In groups of 100 to 200 members: 5 to 20 cents

It seems that individual participation in the life of the community may be more marked as the size of the community approaches fifty members. Past sixty, it clearly falls off, while beyond a hundred the majority of groups have a rather low level of participation with the exception of two instances which deviate widely from the average. As shown by the following figures, an inverse relationship is observed between the size of a group and its apparent dynamism when this is measured by the number of catechumens and the quality of the service held with the priest.

Percentage of catechumens in relation to the number of adults:

In groups of 35 to 60 members: 0 to 20%

In groups of 65 to 90 members: 0 to 30%

In groups of 100 to 200 members: 10 to 55%

It seems that the number of catechumens increases with the size of the group. A crowd attracts a crowd.

The quality of the service during the monthly visit of the priest reflects the same influence of large numbers on the impression produced on an outside observer, whether that be priest, ethnologist, catechist, or future adherent. The degree of the faithful's participation and vitality has been classed in four categories: outstanding, average, mediocre, poor.

Quality of the service during the monthly visit of the priest:

In groups of 35 to 60 members: 6 poor, 2 mediocre, 2 average

In groups of 65 to 90 members: 1 poor, 2 mediocre, 3 average, 1 outstanding

In groups of 100 to 300 members: 2 average and 5 outstanding

We find here clear differences between the communities' size in relation to their internal dynamism and their external radiance. If we return to our initial hypothesis, we verify that a count of fifty members corresponds rather closely with the size of a mature Luo lineage. Beyond that count, when it reaches eighty or a hundred members it is a matter for surprise.

Below fifty members, the participation of the faithful in the life of the community is weak, for the group is too small to contain all the elements necessary for survival and growth, notably in what concerns individual talents: there are not always enough gifted and willing people to direct, organize, conduct the singing, preach and, in general, to assume the functions indispensable for the life of the group.

Beyond fifty members, participation is also weak, for the faithful are too many to have personal relationships with one another that are close and regular enough. Viewed from without, the group seems dynamic but when seen from within it is evident that a small active minority animates a large passive majority; there are really two groups, one within the other, a basic community and an assembly.

If we now return to the local communities of the African churches we see that, like the local communities of the Catholic Church, all are not basic communities. Many are too

small and actually attach themselves to other larger groups: such is the case of the small Legio group of Kirogo or of the Roho community of Tatwe, which is attached to that of Olando. But the marginal character of the African churches and of the community members' origins give a marginal character to the basic community, so that it is a group smaller than the average lineage but has a good proportion of faithful ready to assume their responsibilities and share a feeling of identity, founded at first on a common opposition to evil in the world. A basic community must be small enough, with strong bonds between the members, so that the insecurity and frustrations of the faithful are deeply felt and its point of integration into general society is a locus of conflict.

The optimum size of a basic community depends on many factors: for instance, the culture or subculture in which it develops, the models that inspire it, its principle of association, the means of communication between the members, the relations of the members to society in general. The effort here has been to study one particular case, the local community in the African churches of North Mara.

### *Conclusion*

Three questions were posed at the beginning of this study on the African churches. I think I have answered the first two, concerning the attraction these movements have for the Luo. The third has to do with "religious needs." It is more difficult to respond to.

We could think with Desroche that the Luo suffer from "economic and social frustration" but also from "a total religious frustration; beyond denominational dissidence, there is discernible among the candidates for emancipation, an aspiration for a god who is at last *their* god."<sup>13</sup> But religion, especially among the Luo, is not one compartment of life unrelated to the others. Just like breathing and eating, it is a part of everyday life: just as we eat at fixed times and breathe to a rhythm, there is a rhythm to religious life, which

expresses the feeling that men have of participating in a whole which is beyond them individually and collectively. The Luo do not have needs that are religious without being at the same time social, political, economic, and cultural, and any answer to one of these must take into consideration all the others. Desroche pursues his line of reasoning to the same conclusion: "It is the close conjunction of this double frustration experienced as a whole social phenomenon that leads to a simultaneous working out of a way of life and a way of worship by interiorizing a therapeutic for this frustration in the organizations and programs of daily life." <sup>14</sup>

The fundamental problem of Luo society is the search for a basic community adapted to the new conditions of life and to the different subcultures within the ethnic group. As Georges Balandier stresses, in relation to the Fang and the Ba-Kongo, "innovation therefore occurs on the plane at which it traditionally operates whenever general problems of security are involved—that of religious techniques." <sup>15</sup> The response of the African churches thus corresponds to the tendency of the societies studied to search for general solutions that have a religious foundation. We must hold on to what this signifies in a general way so that we can see that it means the search of man for a community in which he can root himself and through which he can receive, in a form possible for him to assimilate, what he needs to make fast his grip on reality.

## Notes

1. J. C. Froelich, *Animismes* (Paris: De l'Orante, 1964) p. 41.
2. If a couple do not have children, it is because one of them is a sorcerer and the accusation will fall on the woman rather than the man, who, in the eyes of his family, cannot be culpable.
3. J. Seguy, "Messianisme et échec social: les temoins de Jehovah," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions* 21 (1966): 93.
4. Georges Balandier, *The Sociology of Black Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 502.
5. Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society* (London: C. A. Watts, 1966), p. 201-202.
6. Roger Bastide, *Les Religions africaines du Brésil* (Paris: Biblio. de Sociologie Contemporaine, PUF, 1960), p. 153.
7. See the articles "Les Messianismes et la catégorie de l'échec", *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 36 (1963): 61-84 by H. Desroche; and "Messianisme et échec social" by Seguy cited in Note 3 above.
8. A case in point is Girpas Wayoga, who has become a bishop and a spiritual leader in the district after having been a redoubtable magician.
9. Margaret Mead, "Independent Religious Movements," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1958-59): 326.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 327.
11. The story of the experience and its development will not be gone into here. It has been the subject of a report, *La Communauté de base chrétienne*, 1970 Bandundu: Centre d'Etudes Ethnologiques, pp. 147-172.
12. According to the census 40 to 50 percent of the Catholic population are present at these meetings regularly.
13. Desroche, "Les Messianisme et catégorie de l'échec," pp. 80-81.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
15. Balandier, *Sociology of Black Africa*, p. 464.

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